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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Pharmacists to follow docs, nurses in medical exodus

By Christian V. Esguerra

FILIPINO DOCTORS AND NURSES ARE LEAVING, lured by better pay and working conditions abroad. Pretty soon, the Philippines may also begin losing its relatively small number of pharmacists.

Health experts warn of the looming exodus of the country's pharmacists who number no more than 4,000 today.

PHARMACISTS / A7

Summer's over, here come the rains–Pagasa

By Blanche S. Rivera

YEHEY! SIMULA NA YAN NG TAG-ULAN!

WHILE NOT QUITE A storm, tropical depression "Caloy" which blew into the Philippines yesterday effectively ended an unusually scorching summer.

However, this is not yet

SUMMER'S/ A8

Saudi oil supply assured

RIYADH Gov. Prince Salman presents to President Macapagal-Arroyo a book depicting the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Behind Ms Arroyo is Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo.

PCPO-MALACAÑANG

GMA flying home with 138 freed Filipinos

By Fe Zamora

JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA—President Macapagal-Arroyo said Monday that Saudi Arabia had pledged to supply the Philippines with oil in case of supply disruptions and that King Abdullah had granted a mass pardon to 138 Filipino lawbreakers in the oil-rich kingdom.

In addition, Saudi police announced they were releasing eight other Filipinos held in jails in Jeddah.

"The oil minister of Saudi Arabia has conveyed his assurances to me that in the unlikely event of a disruption in the Philippine oil supply, Saudi Arabia is prepared to make up for the shortage," Ms Arroyo said at the Meridian Hotel after talks with Saudi officials.

The Philippines in 2004 imported 37 million barrels of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, accounting for more than 50 percent of the country's total importation of 73 million barrels that year.

Malacañang had said Ms Arroyo's four-day state visit to the kingdom was a mission for the "three O's," a reference to the oil problem, the welfare of overseas Filipino workers, and the long-standing Philippine request for observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Observer status in the OIC is deemed vital in the country's efforts to resolve the decades-old Muslim separatist problem in Mindanao.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye described the mass pardon for Filipinos given by Saudi King Abdullah was the "first in the history of Saudi Arabia."

"*Eto ang pinakamagandang regalo na maiiuwi natin sa Pilip-*

SAUDI/ A7

Chavit vows to leave GMA if Erap walks

By Norman Bordadora

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo only needs to strike a deal with deposed leader Joseph Estrada for Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson to turn his back on her.

Singson said over dinner at the INQUIRER office on Monday that he would go against Ms Arroyo if Estrada were acquitted by the Sandiganbayan of the P4-billion plunder charge leveled against him after his ouster in 2001.

"The case is so strong. The only way he can be acquitted is if there's a deal," the 64-year-old

CHAVIT/ A8

PCPO-MALACAÑANG

THRILLED Filipino workers reach out to shake the President's hand.

Envoy tells how 6 RP seamen survived

By Nikko Dizon

HUGE AND VIOLENT WAVES spelled the difference between survival and uncertainty for the Filipino seamen of the Greek-owned motor vessel Alexandros T that sank in South African waters last week.

The 299-meter bulk carrier, built in 1989 and with a gross tonnage of 91,164, was headed from Brazil to China with a load of steel when it began taking on water in stormy seas in the evening of May 3 about 600 km east of Port Elizabeth.

Of the 33 crew members, only seven were rescued—six Filipinos and a Romanian. The other 26 crewmen, including 18 Filipinos, were declared missing.

Rescue operations have been suspended by the South African authorities after days of futile search. Authorities said that the mission would resume if they received fresh information about the missing crew members.

The Filipino survivors were identified as Allan Omol, 4th engineer; Aljess Miranda, boatswain; Lee Alemania and Elizer Paulina, both deckboys; Reantonio Vergara, deck cadet, and Sherie Montano, engine boy.

One of the Filipinos rescued recalled that he was with seven other Filipinos who were preparing to evacuate the sinking ship, according to Philippine Ambassador to Pretoria Virgilio Reyes Jr.

"In a split second, a huge wave coming from nowhere slammed into the ship, throwing all of them into the cold water," Reyes said in a statement released by the Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

"They all swam to a life raft, which was about 15 meters away," Reyes said. The moon lit up the sky, which enabled the seamen to make their way toward the life raft.

Wearing their life jackets, all eight held each other tightly, the unidentified survivor said. But again, violent waves struck and three of them were separated from the group.

Of the three, one was able to hold on to another life raft. "He was the last survivor to be recovered," the DFA said.

This particular survivor was rescued at 10 a.m. on May 4, a South African radio report said. He was not injured, and had been relatively comfortable overnight in the life raft which was "designed to sustain people," the report said.

ENVOY/ A6

Remember your roots, Satur tells ex-comrade Mike D

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo's chief of staff should look back at his past and steer clear of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, according to militant party-list lawmaker Satur Ocampo.

"Remember your roots," Ocampo said yesterday in taking a swipe at Michael Defensor, who had earlier offered to help him and the rest of the "Batasan 5" in their legal defense, on condition that they renounced the armed struggle being waged by the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

Ocampo, senior representative of Bayan Muna and House deputy minority leader, said Defensor's call was "a mere echo" of the statements of the "anti-Left, anti-due-process Bert Gonzales."

He said Defensor should stay away from Gonzales, "who displays his ignorance of the law by reversing the doctrine that one is presumed innocent until proven guilty."

"What's wrong with this government is that it lets loose legal nincompoops in the Inter-Agency Legal Action Group, led by the biggest legal ignoramus Bert Gonzales, to manufacture a rebellion case against us," Ocampo said.

But Defensor—who in the 1980s was an active member of the militant youth group Kabataang Makabayan (KM), along with the likes of Nathanael Santiago, now secretary general of Bayan Muna—said: "In Europe, the communists, socialists and labor have taken the path of parliamentary struggle to pursue their ideology without the armed component. I think the superiority of their arguments should be their weapon, and not guns and bombs."

Defensor also said the commu-

REMEMBER/ A8

REP. Crispin Beltran PDI PHOTO

Beltran turns 'hyper' as Batasan 5 drop in for a visit

By DJ Yap

YESTERDAY'S VISIT OF THE "Batasan 5" to their unofficial sixth member, Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran, so pleased him that his blood pressure shot up to 160 over 90.

But otherwise, it was a lively meeting of old friends, no matter that it was held under heavy security in Beltran's hospital room at the Philippine Heart Center in Quezon City.

One topic that stood out in the animated conversation was Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

"He's one of the factors that's keeping my blood pressure high. Another one is [President Macapagal] Arroyo," the hypertensive Beltran joked.

The visit to Beltran, 73, was one of the first things that Representatives Satur Ocampo, Joel Virador, Teodoro Casiño, Rafael Mariano and Liza Maza did collectively after they left the protective custody of the House of Representatives on Monday.

Wearing "Free Ka Bel" buttons on their shirts and bearing fruits and a pack of *uraro*, a native pastry, the Batasan 5 arrived at Room 427 at a little past 3 p.m.

The visitors were warned not to get too close to their colleague because he was taking a type of medication that emitted radiation.

"Free Ka Bel Movement" spokesperson Dennis Maga said Beltran was suffering from a cyst in the right kidney, carotid plaque, which causes blockage in blood flow in the carotid area, and signs of a cardiovascular ailment.

Beltran is being treated with Thallium 201, a drug known to emit radiation, according to his daughter Olivia Lalusis.

The medication will determine his heart's "movement," enabling the doctors to determine the cause of his high blood pressure, she said.

The radiation warning did not stop Ocampo and Maza from hugging and bussing their colleague on the cheek.

Dressed in a hospital gown, the

BELTRAN/ A8

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern section of Visayas and the whole of Mindano will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/05/09/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Second **FRONTPAGE**

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Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Surging stocks good, but not for majority of Pinoys, says solon

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE STRONG SHOWING OF the Philippine stock market does not mean the economy is good, a senator said yesterday.

Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II, an economist who was dubbed "Mr. Palengke" for the market inspections he conducted during his stint as trade secretary during President Macapagal-Arroyo's first term, lamented the "disconnect" between the stock market figures and the actual state of the economy.

"We can say that the stock market is good but this does not mean that our economy is also strong. Our economy is OK but it's not as good as the stock market figures (appear to show)," the administration senator said in a radio interview.

Everyday life

"There is really a disconnect between what we call the financial market and the real economy, (as reflected) in the everyday life of Juan de la Cruz," Roxas said, referring to the name given to the Filipino everyman.

Roxas was commenting on news reports yesterday that the Philippine stock market had surged to its highest level in seven years.

Foreign investors were reportedly bullish about the bright prospects of the economy, the improving government revenues, the low interest rates and the relative political peace.

"This is good—we do not want to negate this good news—but we need to act so that this will be felt in the everyday life of Juan de la Cruz," Roxas said.

Roxas said some 60 to 70 percent of the investors in the stock market were foreigners who were only looking for markets to "park" their money.

Parking their money

"Those are all foreign funds. They (investors) are just looking for a place to park their money and it just so happens that the Philippines is the flavor of the month. It's good that they are coming to the Philippines and we do not belittle that, but that really does not benefit (the people)," Roxas said.

Ideally, he said, investments in the stock market should redound to the benefit of the people through the construction of new factories and the establishment of businesses that would create jobs.

"We have not come to that," Roxas said.

He said even local businessmen were feeling the economic crunch.

"If you ask the businessmen here, most of their products are now being sold in sachets or in small portions," Roxas said.

He said the "sachet economy" reflected the hardships being endured by the majority of Filipinos.

He said the escalating oil prices also meant more hardships ahead.

Japan seeks role in gov't, MILF peace negotiations

By Jeoffrey Maitem
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—JAPAN IS SEEKING AN ACtive role in the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

At least two Japanese diplomats met with MILF leaders on Sunday to signify their government's intention to join the International Monitoring Team (IMT).

The IMT, led by Malaysia, was created by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to monitor the ceasefire between the Philippine military and the MILF while peace talks are going on in Kuala Lumpur.

Shigeo Yamada, director of the Second Southeast Asia Division of the Japanese foreign ministry, said he was impressed by the sincerity and commitment of the government and MILF negotiators in the ongoing peace talks.

"The IMT is also doing a great job in sustaining the ceasefire on the ground and touching the lives of the people," Yamada said.

Yamada was accompanied to the meeting with the MILF by Yoshihisa Ishikawa, first secretary of the political section of the Japanese Embassy in Manila. The meeting was held in the MILF satellite office in Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.

Yamada said he also wanted to find out in what other areas Japan could contribute to advance the peace process.

Ghadzali Jaafar, MILF vice chair for political affairs, said his group welcomed Japan's participation in the peace process.

"We are very grateful to the Japanese government for her great concern in ensuring the peace and stability of our homeland and in Mindanao," Jaafar said.

The 12,000-member separatist MILF is observing a three-year-old ceasefire with Manila. The peace talks have bogged down on land and eminent domain issues but the two sides hope to sign a peace treaty later this year.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had asked foreign donors to pour development aid into Mindanao to help bring peace to the region wracked by decades of sectarian conflict.

Japan is a major provider of official development assistance to the Philippines.

Jaafar said in a statement that Japan's active role in the peace process was "very much welcome" and "has long been desired."

The Yamada visit was "a manifestation of the tremendous concern of your government for the current peace process," he said.

As this developed, a private company that operates a chain of hospitals in Japan has offered to donate over P3 million worth of medicines to Muslim communities in the conflict areas in Mindanao:

"The donation, consisting of vaccines, antibiotics, injectables, among other medicines, will be used in medical missions in the provinces of Basilan, Davao Oriental, Lanao del Norte, Sultan Kudarat and Zamboanga del Sur," Secretary Jesus Dureza, the presidential peace adviser, said.

Dureza said the medicines would be coursed through the Bangsamoro Development Agency, the designated development arm of the MILF.

He said the Tokushukai Medical Corp. made the donation after Moner Bajunaid of the nongovernment group, Health Organizational Development and Peace Education, had sought assistance from the company.

Bajunaid was a former member of the MILF peace panel. *With an AFP report*

RP, Australia close to inking security pact

KUALA LUMPUR—THE PHILIPpines and Australia will soon sign a security pact allowing Australian troops to be stationed, albeit temporarily, in the Southeast Asian nation, Philippine Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz said here on Tuesday.

Cruz, who is in Malaysia attending a meeting of Southeast Asian defense ministers, said the Philippines hoped to sign similar agreements with other nations in the region to strengthen the battle against terrorism.

"I have talked to most of the defense ministers in Asean and I have broached to them the idea of a status of forces agreement in order that we can conduct joint exercises against terrorism or for disaster response," Cruz told Reuters.

Annual meetings of defense ministers planned by the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations would be a tremendous boost in helping to hammer out such agreements, he said.

"If Asean were a chariot, the defense ministers' meetings will be an additional stallion to push Asean forward," he added.

"My sense is that all of the defense ministers in Asean will see this as a very logical next step, as a forum for dialogue, a forum for exploring cooperative measures, and the next step towards instituting an Asean security community."

A status of forces agreement (Sofa) with Australia would allow thousands of its troops to participate in annual military exercises with the Philippines and the United States, with whom the Philippines has military agreements.

"With respect to Australia, the negotiating partners have met twice, and I've seen the almost final draft and the issues are easily surmountable, and I think probably in a month or so that should be completed and signed and executed," Cruz said.

Canberra, which has shown deep concern over the activities of Islamic militants in the southern Philippines since the 2002 Bali (Indonesia) bombing, already provides training for about 60 Filipino soldiers a year in Australia. A handful of Australian police officers is based in the Philippines to train their local counterparts in bomb-investigation methods.

Cruz said the Philippines hoped to sign similar agreements with Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Defense officials of Brunei had also expressed interest, he said.

"The next step will be, after I send them a formal letter, to constitute negotiating panels for those Asean members who are keen to enter into a Sofa with the Philippines," he said.

Meanwhile, Cruz said the Philippines will launch a new security pact with the United States on May 24 to jointly fight militants, bird flu, piracy, natural disasters and other threats.

The US, a former colonial ruler of the Philippines, has been a major source of military aid for the latter's armed forces in the form of training and hardware like arms, gunboats and helicopters.

Washington has poured in more than $300 million in security assistance since 2000.

The two countries had agreed to create a legal framework for cooperation on issues outside a defense treaty that dates to the 1950s, said Cruz, who was President Macapagal-Arroyo's lawyer before she named him defense secretary in August 2004. *Reuters*

Alleged Abu arrested

THE MILITARY HAS captured a suspected Abu Sayyaf member accused of involvement in at least six kidnappings in the southern Philippines, an Army official said Tuesday.

Komoni Pael, also known as Abu Bara, was arrested Monday by the 1st Infantry Division in Kumalarang, Basilan, according to Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro.

Two regional courts had issued six warrants for the arrest of Pael, implicated in kidnappings in Basilan and nearby Jolo where Abu Sayyaf rebels maintain hinterland strongholds, Bacarro said in a statement, adding that Pael was being interrogated by the military.

Pael was a follower of Hamsiraji Sali, a prominent Basilan-based Abu Sayyaf commander who was killed in a clash with government troops in April 2004, Bacarro said.

Sali was among five Abu Sayyaf commanders wanted by Washington for their alleged role in the killing of two of three American hostages snatched with several other tourists from the Dos Palmas resort in Palawan in 2001. *AP, AFP*

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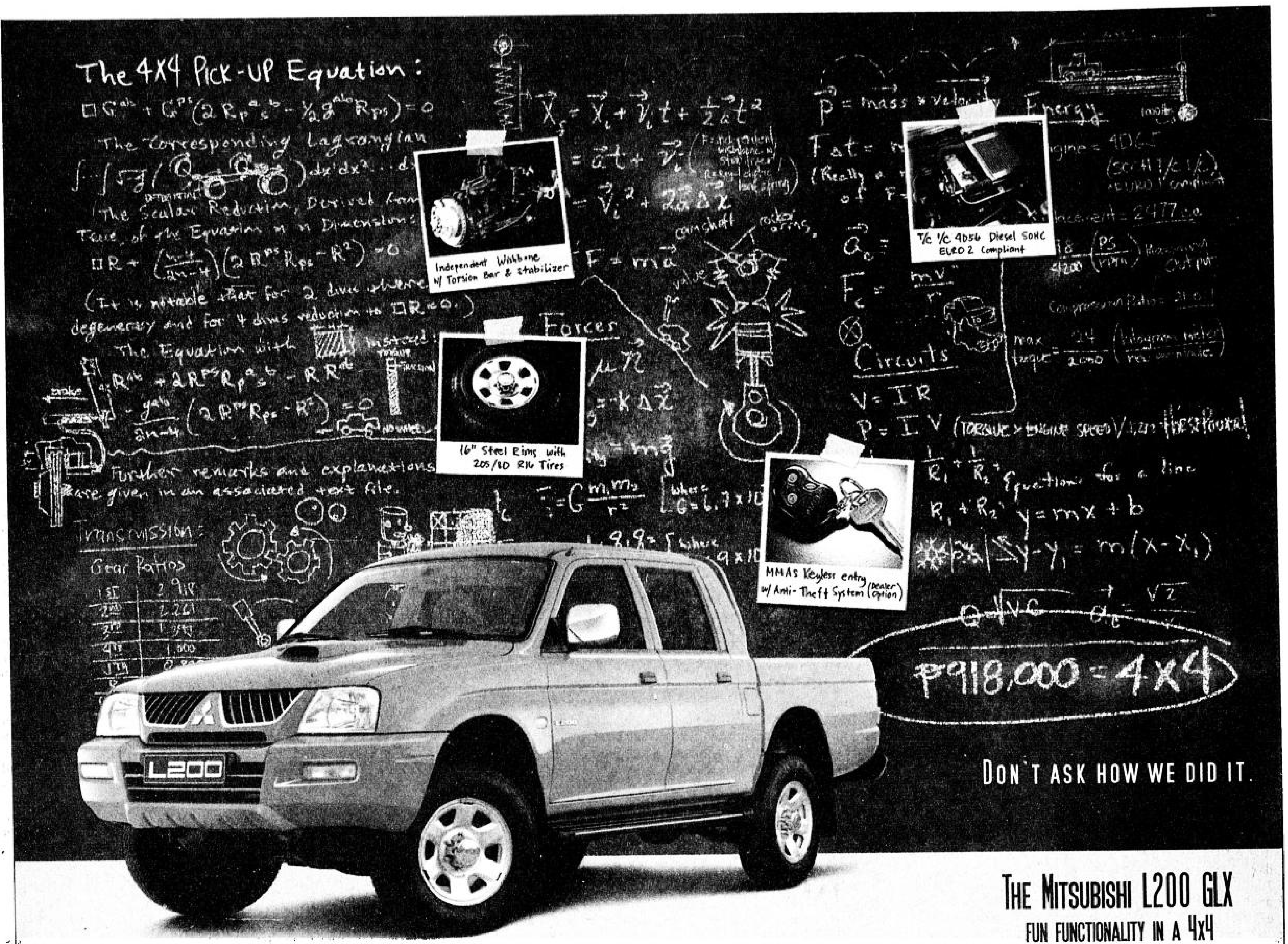
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Distressed pre-need firm would sell plans

By Alcuin Papa

THE DISTRESSED PRE-NEED firm Pacific Plans Inc. is asking the Securities and Exchange Commission to allow it to sell more educational plans as part of its rehabilitation plan.

But holders of education plans that the company has failed to honor maintain that giving PPI a license to sell more plans is "giving them a license to get more victims."

Alfredo Non, PPI president, told the INQUIRER the company applied for a license to sell education plans last December, months after the SEC suspended a PPI subsidiary's license to sell such plans.

Non said a license to sell was "an important component" of the rehabilitation plan for PPI approved by a Makati court last April. "If there is no license what is there to rehabilitate?"

Pacific Plans suspended sales of its traditional open-ended educational plans in 1992 after tuition rates started to rise. The SEC later suspended sales of such plans by all pre-need firms.

A traditional or open-ended plan pays the cost of a beneficiary's education, regardless of what the cost may be at maturity. A fixed plan guarantees payment of a fixed amount set at the time of purchase.

PPI transferred its license to sell fixed plans to a subsidiary, Lifetime Plans Inc., in 2005, but the SEC later suspended the subsidiary's license and ordered it to return all its assets to the mother company.

"We thought that the rehabilitation would be messy and we wanted to protect some 400,000 fixed plan holders from any fallout," Non said, referring to the earlier decision to transfer the fixed plans to the subsidiary. "But the SEC put all of it back together under PPI."

Hence, PPI applied for a new license to sell more fixed plans, Non said.

But Philip Piccio, president of the Parents Enabling Parents Coalition (PEP Coalition), said the SEC should not grant license to PPI.

"They themselves (SEC) said what Pacific Plans did ... was fraudulent," Piccio said. "How can a government regulator give a license back to a company that they concluded had committed fraud?"

Correction

A STORY on Page A10 of the May 8 issue misstated that the Australian Embassy was holding a job fair in Manila on May 17 and 18. The embassy said it is not a job fair but a Skills Migration Expo whose purpose is to showcase the skills needed in Australia and to give information on Australian skills migration. The embassy will not give job interviews or accept resumés at the expo.

The embassy also said a quotation in the story attributed to Ambassador Tony Hely seemed to imply that life in the Philippines was not free of discrimination. That was not an accurate reflection of the quotation in its press release, the embassy said.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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Congress think tank warns on shift to federal system

By Philip C. Tubeza

WHILE THE HOUSE MAJORITY IS going all-out for Charter change, Congress' own think tank has warned against a hasty shift to a federal system of government, saying autonomy does not ensure economic development as demonstrated in Muslim Mindanao.

In a paper titled "Shifting to a Federal Government: Some Issues to Consider," the Congressional Planning and Budget Department (CPBD) said that drawing up state borders, estimating the cost of creating and maintaining state governments, ensuring fiscal sustainability, and developing a fiscal plan to deal with the national debt were major issues that current Cha-cha proposals do not deal with at all.

"The proposed amendments to the 1987 Constitution deal very little with federalism. They barely give an idea how the country will go about shifting to a federal form of government," the CPBD said.

Meanwhile, the People's Movement Against Charter Change (People's March), a network of lawyers, academics, militants, student organizations and church people, held a motorcade around Makati City yesterday to campaign against amending the Constitution and collect anti-Cha-cha signatures.

"We are bringing the issues to the people... so they would know on which side they should be," said Renato Reyes Jr., spokesperson of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), a militant umbrella organization allied with People's March.

The motorcade of seven vehicles, bearing signs denouncing Cha-cha, passed through major thoroughfares. The group distributed leaflets containing arguments against Charter change and encouraged pedestrians and office employees to sign an opposition manifesto.

The group brought the caravan to stations of the Metro Rail Transit and the busy Baclaran area in Parañaque and collected some 2,000 signatures in two hours.

In its paper, the congressional think tank noted that the draft constitution prepared by Malacañang's Consultative Commission that now serves as the House's working draft states only that a federal system would be installed within 10 years from the approval of the revised Charter

"Adding another layer to the existing government setup would bloat the bureaucracy and consequently increase overall spending to support operations. Each federal state would have to maintain their respective executive offices, a separate legislature and a separate judiciary," the CPBD said.

It said it was important to learn from the experience of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"The ARMM may not present the ideal setup but it certainly has been the closest the Philippines has experienced in creating independent territories—a vital requisite if the country were to pursue federalism," the CPBD said.

It pointed out that while the ARMM was authorized to collect taxes and fees, it remained heavily dependent on the national government for its fiscal needs. *With Tarra V. Quismundo*

Luisita tillers to get one title

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN Reform will issue a collective certificate of land ownership award (CLOA) to the first batch of beneficiaries of Hacienda Luisita, which will be parceled out starting next month, the department said yesterday.

Brushing aside the contradicting requests of the Luisita farm workers, Undersecretary Narciso Nieto Jr. said the government was after the immediate transfer of ownership from the Cojuangco family to the qualified farmer beneficiaries.

"It will initially be a collective CLOA just so we can transfer the title from the landowners to the farmers. If we subdivide now, it's going to be a very long process," Nieto told the INQUIRER by phone yesterday.

The Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang Bukid sa Asyenda Luisita (Ambala), which filed the complaint that led to the revocation of the estate's stock distribution scheme, wants a collective CLOA. But another group, the Farm Workers Agrarian Reform Movement (Farm), wants individual titles, claiming Ambala would include only its members in the collective title.

"They should agree ... but in the meantime, it will be collective. There is a big a difference in the time and expenses if we do individual CLOAs," Nieto said.

He said it would take at least another three months if the DAR issued separate CLOAs because this would require the subdivision of the lots based on the number of beneficiaries and individual titling.

The DAR is eyeing the distribution of the first 1,000 hectares of the 4,915-ha Hacienda Luisita by June 10 to coincide with the 18th anniversary of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

"Hopefully by the end of year or early next year, we can complete the distribution of CLOAs for Luisita," Nieto said, adding that 95 percent of the beneficiaries had been identified.

Hacienda Luisita Inc., which manages the sugar estate owned by the Cojuangco family to which former President Corazon Aquino belongs, warned it would bring graft charges against Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman if he went ahead with the plan to parcel out the estate to its workers.

HLI lawyer and spokesperson Vigor Mendoza said in a statement that the Cojuangco family, the estate's majority owners, had questioned the government's decision revoking the stock distribution option scheme and the case was pending in the Supreme Court.

He accused the government of breaking up the estate to get back at Aquino for demanding President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation.

Prosecutor quits case

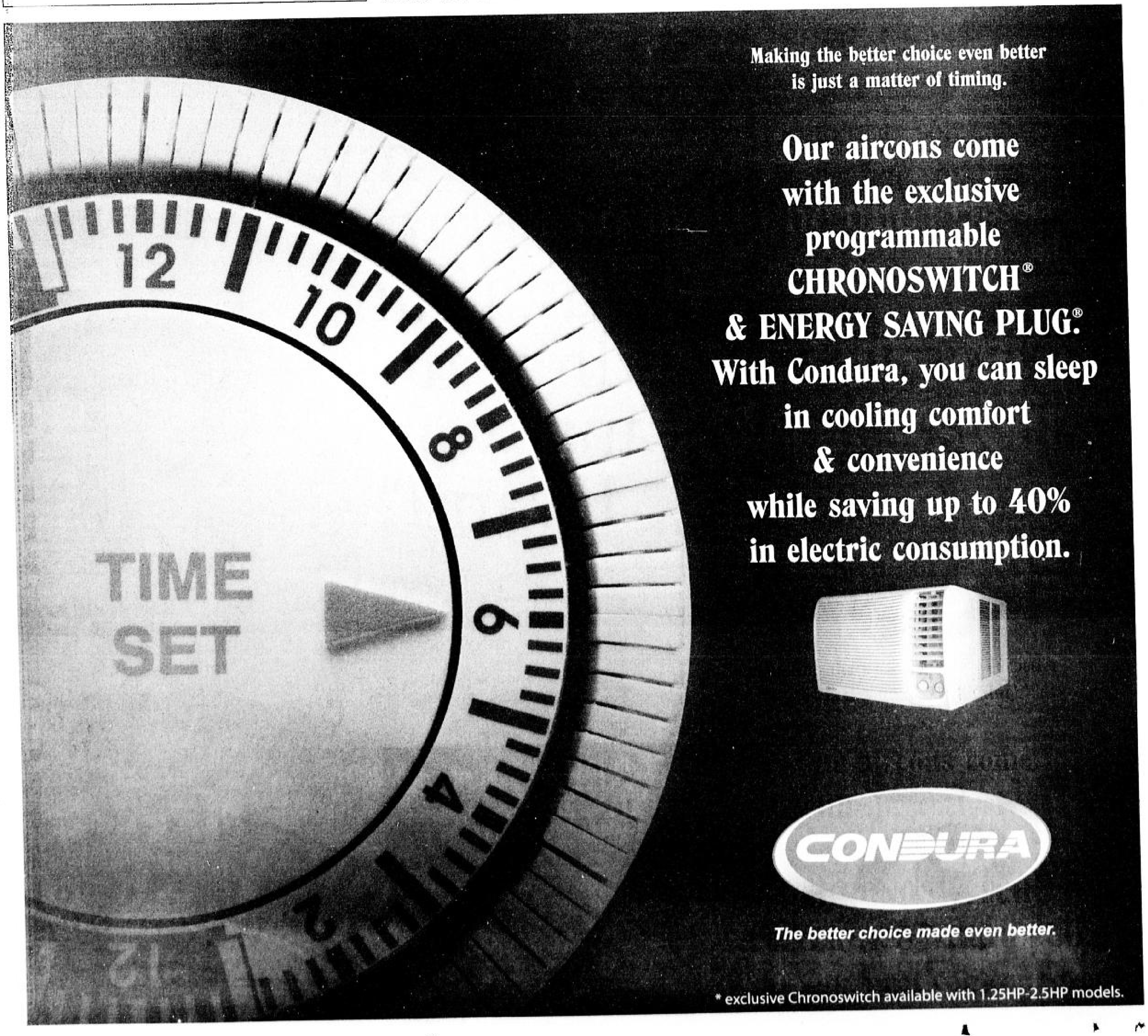
THE LEAD PROSECUTOR IN THE rape case filed by a Filipino woman against four US Marines has resigned, citing a "heavy workload."

Makati City prosecutor Feliciano Aspi resigned last week as head of the five-member panel the Department of Justice formed to prosecute Marine Lance Corporals Keith Silkwood, Dominic Duplantis, Daniel Smith and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier.

"I inhibited myself, sort of excused myself from the panel because the cases I'm handling here may just pile up," Aspi told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Senior State Prosecutor Emilie Fe de los Santos will replace Aspi as head of the prosecution panel.

Aspi resigned along with Assistant City Prosecutor Christopher Garvida, who excused himself for the same reason. *Tarra V. Quismundo*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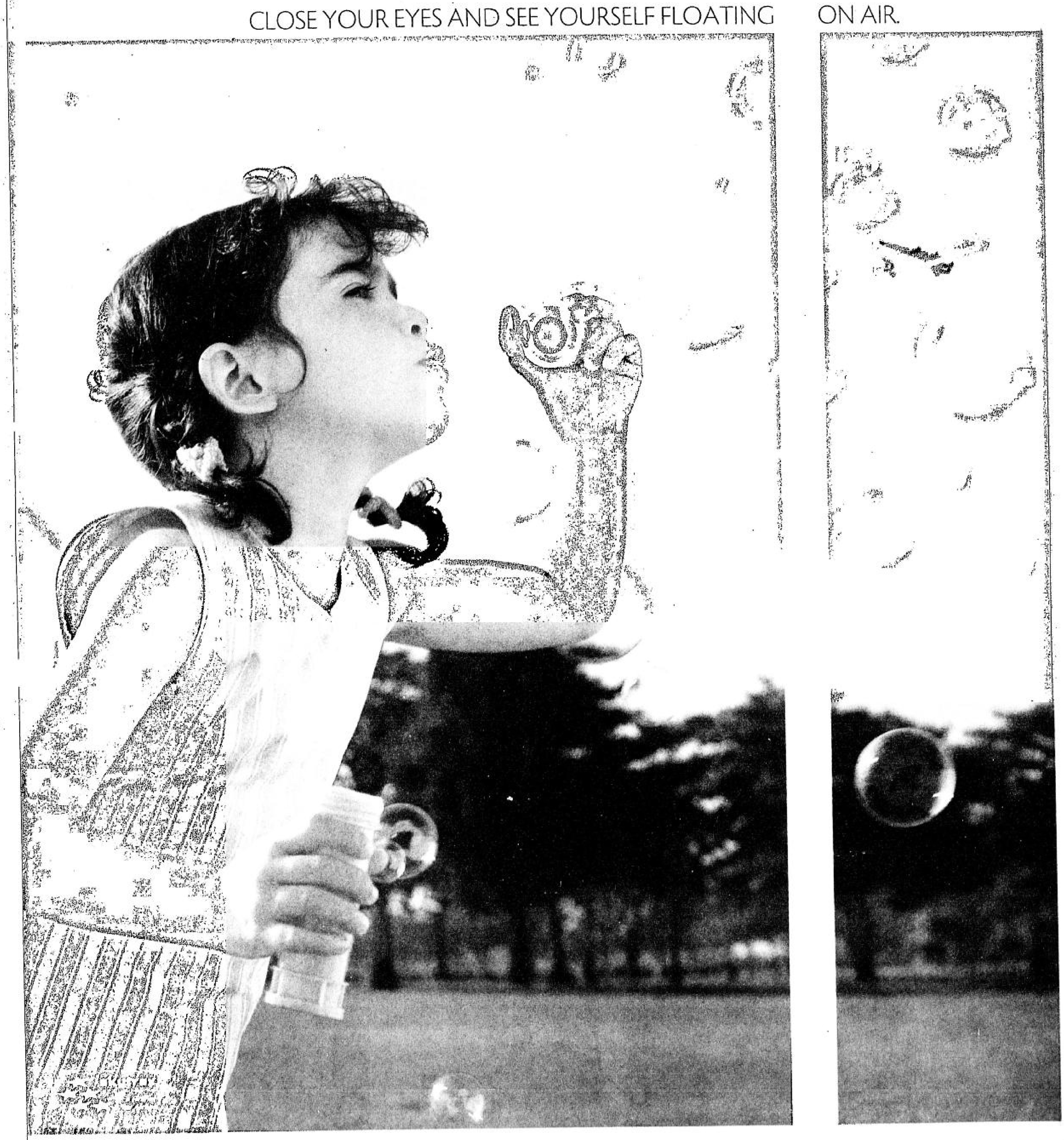
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Envoy tells how 6 Filipino seamen survived

From page A1

It said four other life rafts spotted by rescue aircraft were found to be empty.

Fear of hypothermia

Andre Botes, the head of the South African Maritime Search and Rescue Operations, earlier said that some of those rescued had mentioned that when the crew attempted to abandon the ship, which was fast breaking up after taking on water, some could not reach the life rafts.

The discovery of the empty life rafts had sparked concern that the people in the water might have suffered from hypothermia. Botes said the water temperature could have been between 16 and 18 degrees Celsius when the incident happened.

The six Filipino survivors were taken by the rescue ship Fortune Express to the South African mainland. They were to be ferried to an Air Force Base at Durban by a military helicopter, Reyes said.

The survivors were expected to receive medical treatment as well as psychological counseling there, he said.

Reyes said he was coordinating with the representative of the ship's owners for the Filipino seamen's repatriation to the Philippines, as well as the payment of their outstanding salaries and other benefits.

The six survivors have spoken with their families in the Philippines by satellite phone with the help of Inter-Orient Agency, their recruitment agency, Reyes said.

Yesterday, the Filipino International Seafarers Solidarity Organization (Fisso) called on the Philippine government to ratify the recently adopted Consolidated Maritime Labor Convention to further assure the health and safety of Filipino seamen.

Maritime conventions

The convention, which was adopted during the International Labor Organization conference in February, put together and updated 68 separate ILO maritime conventions and recommendations that would apply to all commercial ships, except fishing boats and traditional vessels.

Fisso, in a statement, cited the importance of giving more protection to Filipino seamen through CMLC following the sinking of the MV Alexandros T.

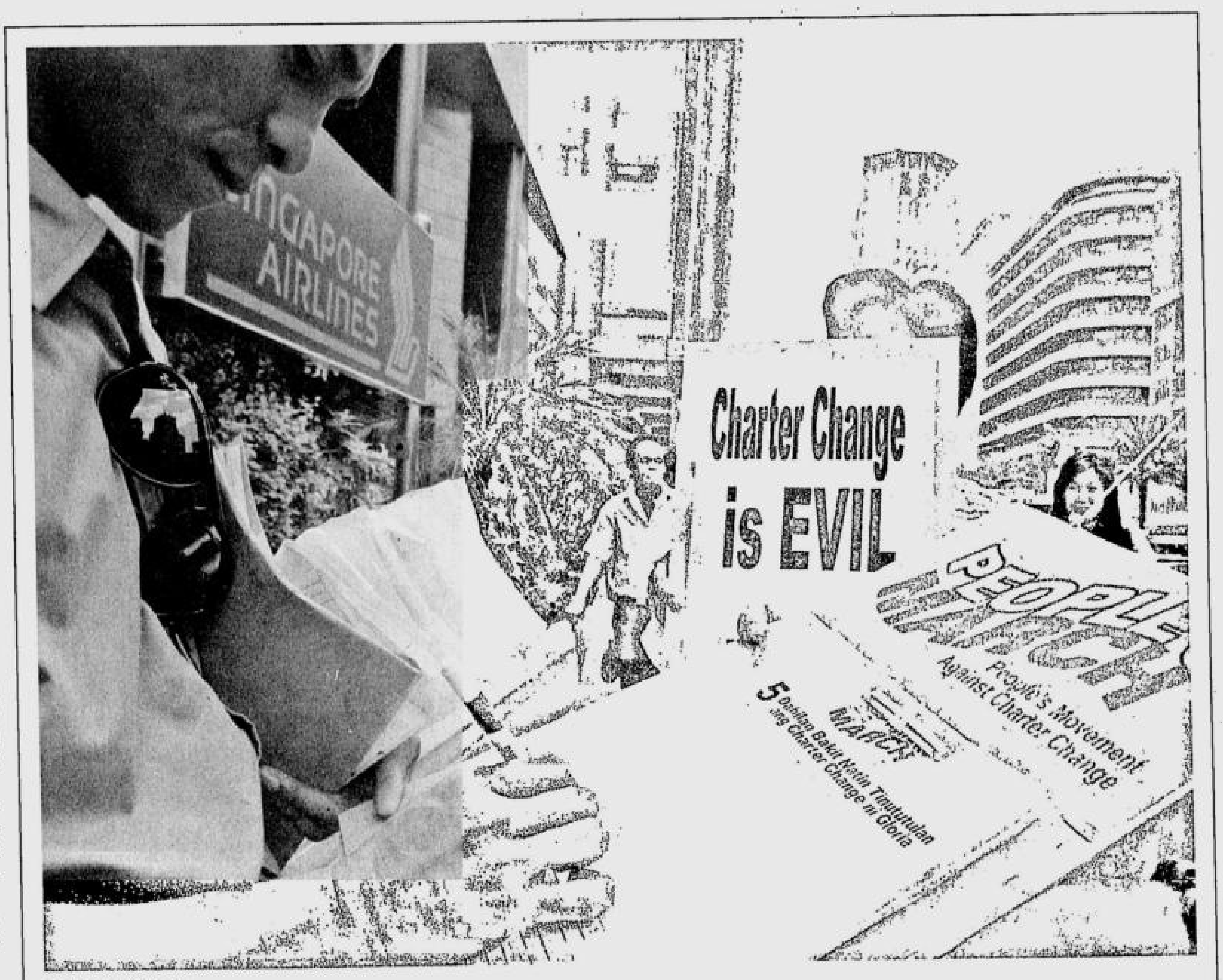
"This incident again highlights the vulnerability of Filipino seafarers, who comprise about a quarter of the global maritime labor," the group said.

"MV Alexandros T will certainly not be the last accident to involve Filipino seafarers."

Minimum requirements

The CMLC sets minimum requirements for seafarers to work on a ship and contains provisions on conditions of employment, hours of work and rest, accommodation, recreational facilities, food and catering, health protection, medical care, welfare and social security protection.

Aside from updating existing maritime labor instruments, the CMLC contains new subjects, such as occupational safety and health to meet concerns, such as the effects of noise and vibration on workers. *With a report from Jerome Aning*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5 Dahilan Bakit Natin Tinututulan ang Charter Change ni Gloria

JUST SAY NO
To counter the "people's initiative" for a shift to the parliamentary system, members of militant groups gather signatures against Charter change along Ayala Avenue in Makati. *(Story on Page A4.)* RYAN LIM

BIRTHDAY GIFT IDEAS

Seedlings for Mother Earth

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Birthdays would no more be just about cakes, new clothes, prayers and wishes for long life and happiness.

For at least 1,450 personnel of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Central Luzon, birthdays would hence mean gifting oneself with at least 12 seedlings and encouraging kin, friends and colleagues to also give them as gifts.

This new initiative for the environment is called "Birthday Seedlings for Mother Earth (BSME)."

The brains behind it, Dr. Sofio Quintana, the DENR's regional technical director for forestry, launched the project on Monday on the eve of his 50th birthday.

He gifted himself with 12 seedlings of Dau, an indigenous species, and got about 30 fruit seedlings as gifts.

Already three feet high, the trees would go to a nursery at the DENR regional office.

Regidor de Leon, DENR regional executive director, on Monday issued a memorandum directing the seven provincial offices and 16 city offices to adopt the SBME and establish a nursery for the agency-initiated project.

Quintana, who recently assumed the post, came up with the BSME to make up for the lack of funds for seedlings amid rising demand from local governments involved in putting up mini-forests or roadside planting projects.

"We could proceed with these endeavors without relying on government funds," Quintana said.

By themselves, the DENR staff could contribute 17,400 seedlings that would be gathered from their own backyards or right in their communities.

Indigenous species like molave, narra and rain tree would be preferred.

Quintana said the DENR personnel were also fulfilling their "moral obligation" to the environment in redefining birthdays as a thanksgiving to Mother Earth through what he called an "ecological token."

On top of addressing the plunder and degradation of the forests, he said his appreciation for trees began when he worked as a laborer at a forest nursery.

This was how the Marinduque native put himself through college at the Gregorio Araneta University Foundation, now the De La Salle-Araneta University.

The demand for trees in Central Luzon, a major agricultural and industrial area, is immense.

DENR reports showed that of the total 2.1 million hectares in the region, at least 963,120 hectares were forestlands. The potential protection forests cover at least 413,301 hectares.

Efforts to establish forest plantations are going on on a modest scale, with 486 hectares planted in 2004 and 1,658 hectares planted around the Pampanga River Basin in 2005.

De Leon said the regional office organized a team in April to help package reforestation investments in open areas within forest zones.

He said investors had lost their enthusiasm for this type of project due to red tape and numerous requirements.

The team, he said, would help speed up the application process.

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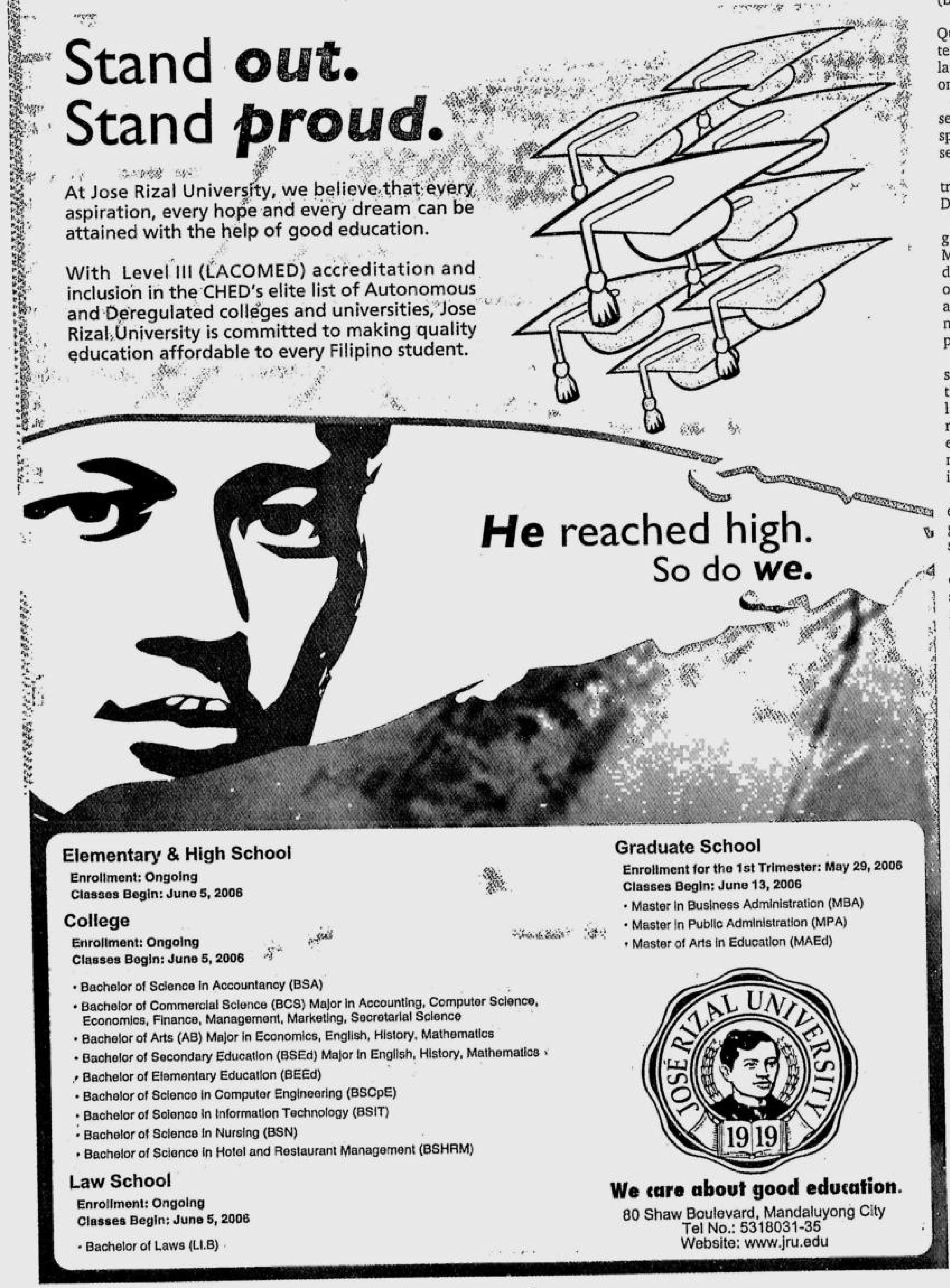
PLDT retail business group senior vice president Butch Jimenez (right) receives the magic wand from PLDT AVP for card services Cristina Balingit signaling the grand launch of PWEDE! card, the country's first reloadable all-in-one pre-paid call and Internet card from telecom giant PLDT-Smart held last weekend at the Republic of Malate. PWEDE! card can be used from any PLDT landline, PLDT and Smartalk payphones, and Smart and Talk 'N Text cell phones.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Saudi oil supply assured

From page A1

inas (This is the best gift that we can bring home to the Philippines)," Ms Arroyo told the jubilant Filipino community on the third day of her state visit.

Bunye had previously announced that Ms Arroyo had secured the Saudi king's pardon for 50 OFWs.

Ms Arroyo said she was surprised when the Ministry of Interior told her that the king was going to pardon not just 50 lawbreakers but "138 Filipinos" accused of serious and minor crimes.

Blood money waived

"Even the blood money for those involved in serious offenses has been waived," Ms Arroyo said to loud applause from the Filipinos gathered at a hotel here.

A plane was being chartered so that the 138 Filipinos pardoned by the king could fly home with Ms Arroyo on Thursday, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said.

It was not immediately clear when the eight other Filipinos being released from jails in Jeddah would be coming home.

OFW welfare

In a separate piece of good news, Consul General Penducina Lomondon said 79 other Filipinos being held at immigration centers for being runaways or having no proper documents were set to be repatriated to the Philippines.

Ms Arroyo said her administration would continue to look after the welfare of the OFWs, whose annual remittances have exceeded $10 billion, contributing to a construction boom in the country and helping prop up the economy.

"I want to assure those who are facing cases, we want to assure their families of full legal support," she said.

Ms Arroyo said she had ordered the labor department and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration to hire Arab lawyers to defend the OFWs before Saudi courts.

'Short-term gimmicks'

But Migrante, a militant group fighting for the interests of Filipino workers abroad, slammed Ms Arroyo for using the OFWs for media mileage, saying the OFW problem needed "long-term solutions, not short-term gimmicks."

"While the release of the 138 Filipino workers from prison is certainly welcome news, what about the plight of the estimated 1,000 plus that still languish in jail?" Connie Bragas-Regalado, Migrante International chair, said in a statement. "What about the conditions of the more than 800,000 OFWs in the kingdom? Clearly, Arroyo's publicity stunts in Saudi Arabia will hardly address their troubles."

Citing a 2004 Department of Foreign Affairs report, Migrante said there were approximately 820,000 OFWs in Saudi Arabia, including many women working as domestics or household help (148,500). It placed at 318,500 the number of men working as production and construction workers.

Pinoys remain vulnerable

"These jobs often leave the Filipino migrants vulnerable to a range of contract violations, including physical and emotional abuse. Contract substitution, delayed or nonpayment of salaries, the refusal of employers to issue exit visas or grant employees a day-off are systemic problems that require more than an Arroyo photo opportunity with Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah," Bragas-Regalado said.

She urged Ms Arroyo to take up with King Abdullah, among other things, the cases of OFWs on death row, the construction of a shelter for male OFWs and the right of OFWs to leave the country whenever they desire. Currently, OFWs without exit visas granted by their employers are prevented from leaving the country, she said.

Probe the funds

"Particular to the OFWs in jail, there should also be an independent investigation as to how legal funds for OFWs are used by the Department of Foreign Affairs," she added.

Under the 1995 Migrant Workers Act, the amount of P100 million is supposed to be earmarked in the annual budget to help OFWs who get into trouble with the law. *With a report from PDI Research*

Pharmacists to follow docs, nurses …

From page A1

"It's already happening," Yolanda Robles, president of the Philippine Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, said at a press conference yesterday.

In the past three years, the University of the Philippines lost 10 of its top pharmacy professors to higher-paying posts in the same field in the United States and Canada, said Robles, who is dean of the UP College of Pharmacy.

According to Robles, the United States alone will be needing some 60,000 pharmacists in the next 10 years.

Unlike doctors and nurses—the health care professions where the brain drain is most pronounced—local pharmacists actually earn decent salaries, probably better than they would pull abroad, Robles noted.

Starting salaries

At the Philippine General Hospital, pharmacists get a starting salary of about P13,000 a month, she said.

A number of pharmacists, in fact, already enjoy incomes that are probably higher than what they would get abroad because of the training, experience and reputation that they have obtained right here in the country, said Robles.

Still, professionals will always want to aim for the highest salaries and this was possible only in the more developed countries, she said.

On April, Dr. Shigeru Omi, the World Health Organization's regional director for the Western Pacific, warned that the Philippines faced a health work force crisis because of the unfettered emigration of doctors, nurses and other health workers.

Best and brightest

Omi said that the Philippines was losing more than 15,000 nurses annually, more than any other country in the world. Many of them are among the country's best-educated and most-experienced nurses, leaving a critical shortage of qualified specialty nurses.

Not a few doctors in the Philippines are training for higher-paying nursing jobs in the United States, the WHO official said.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III recently noted that around 6,000 licensed doctors were enrolled in nursing schools this year, more than double the 2,000 doctors studying to become nurses last year.

The Alliance of Health Workers has warned that the country's health system faces collapse in two years as Filipino doctors and nurses leave for better jobs overseas.

According to the Health Alliance for Democracy, a total of 51,580 nurses left the Philippines from 2000 to 2003. The following year, around 5,000 doctors chose to become nurses abroad.

The prospect of losing yet another vital sector of the health care profession, pharmacy, is worrisome to health experts who note that the Philippines is already battling the high cost of medicine and the proliferation of fake drugs.

Normita Leyesa, the immediate past president of the Philippine Society of Hospital Pharmacists, said a lack of qualified pharmacists could leave Filipinos at the mercy of people who are not competent to dispense medicine.

She noted that drug stores were not allowed to operate without a supervising pharmacist.

A lack of pharmacists would hamstring the state-run "Botika ng Bayan," a program aimed at making essential drugs affordable to poor people by selling cheaper medicine mostly imported from India and Pakistan.

Under the program, the government offers attractive financing plans to entrepreneurs interested in operating small drug stores.

In the absence of a law regulating drug prices, Leyesa said the Botika ng Bayan could help encourage transnational drug companies to "lower their prices."

Leyesa is a member of the multisectoral technical working group studying drug price regulation to help Congress come up with appropriate legislation.

Another year of nursing

In a move to arrest what it said was the declining quality of nursing education in the country, a technical panel of the Commission on Higher Education has recommended adding another year to the nursing course.

But CHEd Chair Carlito Puno said the recommendation was unlikely to be implemented soon.

"The CHEd sitting en banc will make the final decision," Puno said, adding that he was personally against an extra year's study in nursing.

"My worry is that when nursing becomes a five-year course, enrollment will plunge. The CHEd might be blamed for that," he said.

Puno ordered the cancellation of scheduled public hearings on the issue, saying it was giving the impression that the recommendation had already been approved.

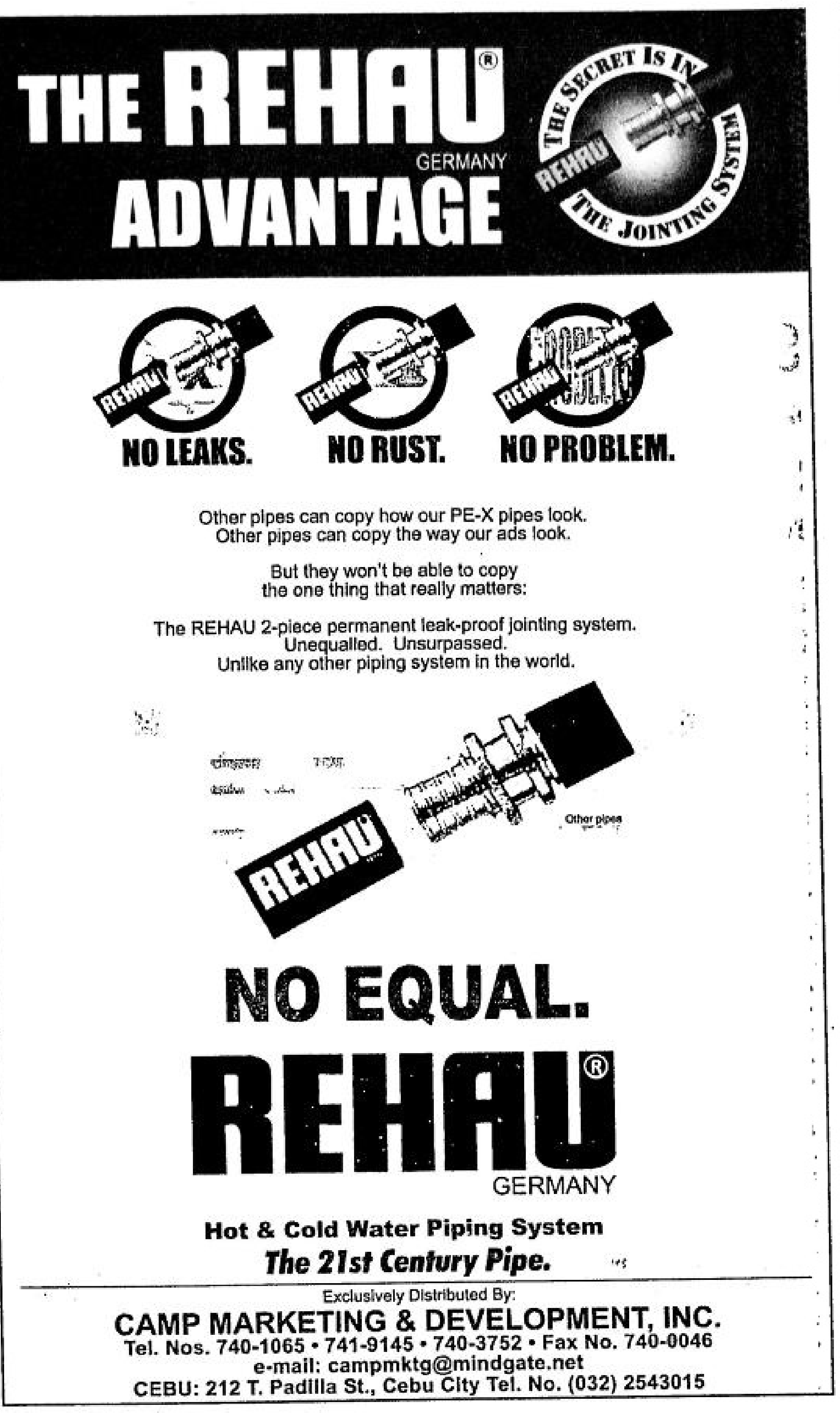
He said other stakeholders like school owners, parents and students should be involved in the hearings.

Puno noted that prospective nursing freshmen had shifted to other courses when they heard there was a possibility of another year being added to the nursing course.

"Can you imagine the political repercussions if enrollment in nursing plunges?" Puno said.

He said nursing graduates who had gone to work abroad were contributing significantly to the economy through their remittances.

The addition of yet another year to the nursing course will add to the woes of parents who are still reeling from the yearly tuition increases and the rising cost of sending their children to school. *With reports from Alcuin Papa and Melody Asuque*



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HE MAY have been confined in hospital for quite a time now, but Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran is in fine fettle. (See leaflets over his bed.) A nurse checks his blood pressure, which shot up to 160/90, during the visit by Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo ft) and other members of the "Batasan 5."

Beltran turns 'hyper' during Batasan 5 …

From page A1

smiling Beltran appeared to be in high spirits as he shook hands with his visitors.

A nurse took Beltran's blood pressure, found that it had risen to 160/90, and gave him a pill.

'That's your line'

The meeting was marked by shared notes on political developments.

Beltran recalled how he found himself clapping when Casiño boldly said on television that arresting the Batasan 5 would be "politically bloody" for the Arroyo administration.

"Actually, that's your line," Casiño said, eliciting laughter from Beltran.

The lawmakers talked about Beltran's arrest in Bulacan on Feb. 25, and how Ocampo et al. narrowly avoided arrest after holding a press conference at the Sulo Hotel in Quezon City on the same day.

Ocampo recounted how he and his colleagues had to negotiate the side streets around the hotel after leaving it through a basement exit.

The six lawmakers also discussed developments in their respective cases. Some commented that the Department of Justice motion seeking the inhibition of Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Jenny Lind Delorino could spell bad news for Beltran, whose rebellion case is being heard in the same court.

Virador said the cases of the six lawmakers were obviously linked to Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, despite government statements to the contrary.

Ms Arroyo issued PP 1017 imposing a week-long state of national emergency on Feb. 24.

In a ruling last week, the Supreme Court declared that certain provisions of PP 1017, including those involving warrantless arrests, were illegal.

Show biz gossip

But apart from political talk, the six lawmakers indulged in show biz gossip.

Out of nowhere, Beltran commented on how Keanna Reeves, winner of the ABS-CBN reality show "Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Edition," was helping Maza's party-list group, Gabriela, in its advocacy.

"What she has been saying is very positive for Gabriela and the women's movement," Beltran said.

Soon, Casiño was saying that he had met Reeves' "housemate," Bianca Gonzales, a TV host.

"*Sila pa rin ba ni* (Is she still seeing TV director) Lino Cayetano?" Mariano said, referring to Gonzales' erstwhile boyfriend.

Amid the laughter, one lawmaker was heard saying: "I heard that [TV host] Mariel Rodriguez and ['Pinoy Big Brother' housemate] Zanjoe Marudo are now together."

But the topic that kept recurring in the conversation was Justice Secretary Gonzalez.

Ocampo said Gonzalez's temper could be traced to the kidney dialysis he is reportedly undergoing.

"*Naaburido na talaga siya, sa akin* (The strain is getting to him, especially about me)," Beltran said.

"He reacted quite strongly to [Sen. Panfilo] Lacson's exposé [of his dialysis]," Ocampo said. "*Di talaga naman yun isyu* (It really isn't an issue)."

Gonzalez has said he underwent dialysis only once a long time ago.

Beltran's case

In Nairobi, Kenya, where he is attending the Inter-Parliamentary Union summit, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he had brought the cases of the six lawmakers to the attention of the foreign parliamentarians.

"I just ended argument before IPU human rights committee charging the [Philippine] government with violation of the human rights of the Batasan 5 and Beltran [at 3:30 p.m. Monday, Kenya time]," he said in a text message.

Pimentel, who is attending the summit along with Senate President Franklin Drilon and Senators Richard Gordon and Lacson, said the IPU human rights committee appeared more interested in Beltran's case.

"My impression is that [it] would focus on Beltran's case because he's still in detention," he said.

Ironically, at the April 2005 IPU summit in Manila, it was Casiño who distributed letters to the parliamentarians, urging them to look into the killing, detention and harassment of militant Filipino group leaders and members.

Commenting on Justice Secretary Gonzalez's threat to file new charges against the Batasan 5, Pimentel said: "Of course, Gonzalez wants to impress his boss. … But he's clearly on the wrong side of justice." *With a report from TJ Burgonio*

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It ain't over yet —PNP

By Luige A. del Puerto

DESPITE THE SETBACK IN THE GOVernment's efforts to pin down the "Batasan 5," the Philippine National Police yesterday went on the offensive and attempted to downplay the court resolution rejecting the inclusion of the five in a rebellion charge.

PNP spokesperson Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said the government had reserved the right to pursue the rebellion charge and might simply file a separate case against Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño, Liza Maza, Rafael Mariano and Joel Virador.

Thus, Pagdilao said, the party-list lawmakers' claim of victory was "hollow."

"The court has not ruled on the merits of our case," he said, adding:

"Many battles are fought before a victory is won."

Pagdilao, who called the setback a "procedural lapse," admitted that the PNP had been clearly advised by the Department of Justice against arresting the Batasan 5.

A DOJ letter, sent on Sunday night, directed the interior department and the PNP to allow the five lawmakers to leave Congress "freely and without intervention."

The letter also indicated the DOJ's intention to pursue the rebellion case.

"The advice is understood to be without prejudice to any new legal action to be undertaken by the DOJ," it said.

Asked to comment on the lawmakers' threat to sue the police, PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao said: "We welcome the filing of the case and we are confident we can defend our actions."

The PNP chief said he would leave it to the DOJ to decide on how to proceed.

He said the PNP would not stop the Batasan 5 from holding protest rallies if they were granted permits, and would ensure peaceful mass actions and controlled traffic.

Remember your …

From page A1

nist insurgency had been a bane to the Philippines because most business investors continued to cite it as a top concern.

"The main complaint of investors in our top investment destinations—tourism, mining and outsourcing—is the threat of communist rebels," he said.

Wishful thinking

The Batasan 5—Ocampo, Bayan Muna Representatives Joel Virador and Teodoro Casiño, Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano and Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza—left the House of Representatives on Monday, ending a 70-day stay there under protective custody.

Their decision to leave came on the heels of a Makati judge's rejection of an amended complaint filed by the Department of Justice, which sought to include them in the rebellion case it earlier lodged against Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran.

Himself a militant lawmaker, Beltran was arrested in February and is now being held at the Philippine Heart Center in Quezon City. *(See story on Page A1.)*

Ocampo said the National Security Council had no choice but to order the Philippine National Police to allow the Batasan 5 to leave the House without being arrested.

"The truth is, the government has no solid evidence to back its rebellion case against us," he said yesterday, dismissing as wishful thinking the threat of Solicitor General Antonio Nachura to build up new cases against them because the DOJ was "not giving up on them."

Ocampo added that by "opening his mouth and merely parroting Bert Gonzales' anticommunist line," Defensor "confirmed" that the rebellion case was "truly baseless."

'Not an option'

To Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's remark that the Batasan 5 should "go back to the mountains," Ocampo said in a statement: "Has the Arroyo [administration] run out of ideas?

"Going to the mountains is not an option for us now. We have rights and responsibilities as members of Congress and as part of the parliament of the streets. We intend to help stop Charter change, aid in filing a new impeachment complaint [against Ms Arroyo], and continue the campaign to oust the Arroyo regime."

Ocampo said Gonzalez made the remark "to help him out of embarrassment and desperation."

"Only if we go to the mountains, as Gonzalez suggests, would he have at least circumstantial evidence to file a rebellion case [against us]," Ocampo said, adding that the justice secretary should go back to his law books "and relearn due process."

Disengagement

Defensor said that while he had no regrets about his affiliation with the KM, he disengaged himself from the group after four years when he was invited to join the CPP-NPA.

He said he was a KM member from 1987 to 1990.

Defensor described the radical student organization as "being part of the National Democratic Front, much like Bayan (Bagong Alyansang Makabayan), but it is not necessarily a communist front."

He said he joined KM because it was the only organization then that provided an outlet for his nationalist-democratic views, although he had misgivings about its links to left-wing groups.

Said Defensor: "[KM is] like a training ground for the Communist Party, either for its think tank or its rebel unit. On the day that I was about to be recruited and trained as one of the cadres of the CPP-NPA, I went to church and had a change of heart. I didn't want to be a communist."

He said one of the reasons for his disengagement was his disagreement with the ways of the group, such as the mass murder of alleged deep-penetration agents in Quezon and Laguna. *With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Chavit vows to leave …

From page A1

Singson said.

Singson said he would also oppose Ms Arroyo if her administration obtained Estrada's release on recognizance as proposed by Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor.

Estrada, 69, is detained in his rest house in Tanay, Rizal.

"I'd withdraw support (from Ms Arroyo) if Estrada is released before the case is through," Singson said, adding that to free him now would be against the law. "I say, finish the case first and then pardon him."

Singson said the plunder charge portrayed Estrada as a corrupt leader who received millions from "jueteng" lords, insider trading and excise tax kickbacks.

"The trial will all be for naught if a deal is struck," the governor said.

Fooling each other

"They're just fooling each other. Erap says he also wants reconciliation and would not support moves to oust President Arroyo. And yet, he still supports destabilization efforts," Singson said.

"President Arroyo, on the other hand, wants to strike a deal with him for reconciliation."

Singson said he would be present at the resumption of the 5-year-old Estrada trial, scheduled in two weeks, to hear the former Chief Executive continue his testimony in his defense.

"I always attend hearings … so I can spot miscues in his testimony to help the prosecution," Singson said.

He said he had missed only one of Estrada's five appearances at the Sandiganbayan.

Nothing new

The next phase in the trial would be the prosecution's cross-examination. But Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio has been quoted in newspapers as saying that there might not be any need for it because Estrada had never offered any solid evidence so far in his defense except denials.

"He [Estrada] said nothing new. He just wanted to paint me in a bad light," Singson said.

Asked about the allegations of corruption against Ms Arroyo and the involvement of her family in illegal gambling payoffs, Singson simply said that he had heard about them.

The governor, who said he wanted to be remembered as someone who always told the truth, would not comment further on First Gentleman Mike Arroyo and Pampanga Rep. Mikey Arroyo's alleged jueteng links.

"I've no comment. I already have too many enemies," Singson said.

Summer's over, here come …

From page A1

officially the beginning of the rainy season, according to forecasting chief Herman Ngohayon of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

The Pagasa weather bureau usually declares the start of the rainy season at the end of May.

The bureau's weather bulletin said the tropical depression was still too far to directly affect the country in the next 24 to 36 hours.

Packing maximum sustained winds of 55 kph, Caloy was spotted 840 km east of northern Mindanao at 11 a.m. yesterday. It is moving west at 9 kph and is forecast to be at 660 km east of Northern Mindanao today and 460 km east southeast of Southern Samar on Thursday morning.

By Friday morning, it will be 160 km east of Northern Samar, Pagasa said.

Ngohayon said there will be rain in the Bicol region, the Eastern Visayas and Mindanao.

Pagasa warned that the rains could trigger flash floods and landslides in the Eastern Visayas and northeastern Mindanao.

The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms, mostly in the afternoon or evening.

Caloy is the first of two tropical cyclones expected to affect the country this month. It is the third tropical cyclone to enter the Philippines this year, following tropical depressions Agaton on Jan. 21 and Basyang on March 6. At least 19 typhoons enter the Philippines every year.

The weather bureau has noted consistent indications of a weak La Niña in the country that will continue to influence climate. This means continuous heavy rains, the probability of more tropical cyclones and flooding in some areas.

Pagasa has said the increased occurrence of typhoons, floods and heavy rainfall since November 2005 may be explained by La Niña.

The country's eastern seaboard experienced "above average" rainfall during the dry months.

La Niña is a weather pattern in which unusually cool surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean result in storm surges and strong winds. In most parts of Asia, La Niña is associated with increased rainfall, storms and flooding.

Heavy rains in December 2005 triggered landslides and flash floods in Dipolog, Zamboanga del Norte, causing the death of one farmer.

Six days of continuous rains caused the collapse of a mountainside in Southern Leyte which buried the village of Guinsaugon. The Office of Civil Defense said 154 people were confirmed dead and 978 others were missing and presumed dead in the tragedy.

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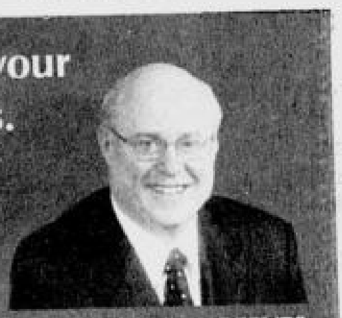

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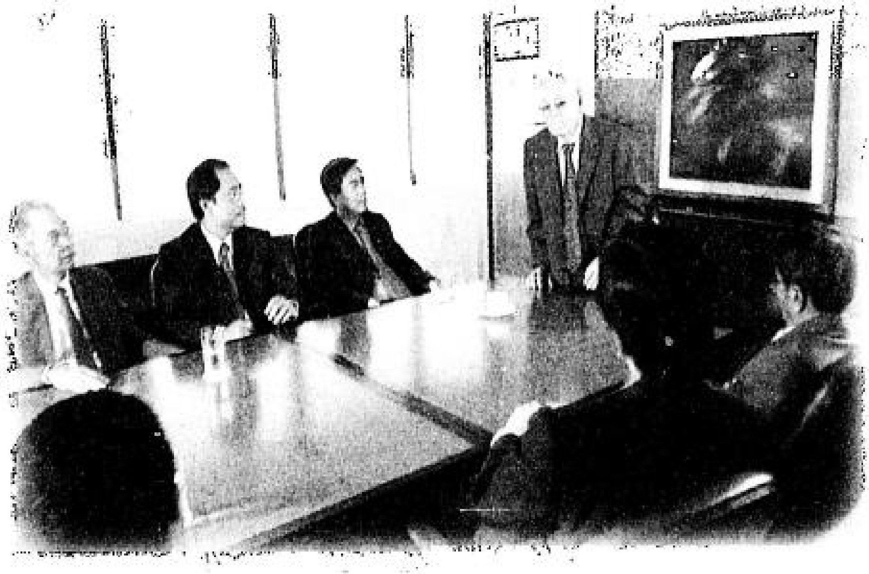

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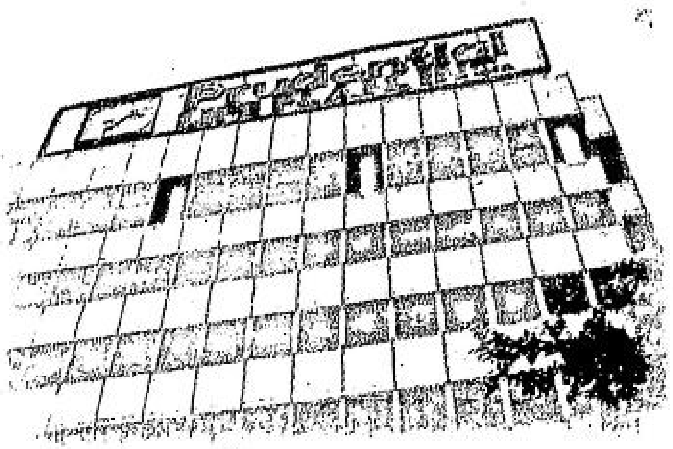

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Over 1 million Filipino families have chosen to plan ahead with Prudentialife. Kasi naman, tiwala sila sa katatagan nito. With a growing trust fund of over P14 billion and over P33 billion in assets, 30,000 loyal and dedicated sales force, ang Prudentialife ay larawan ng isang masayang pamilya na may passion to serve.

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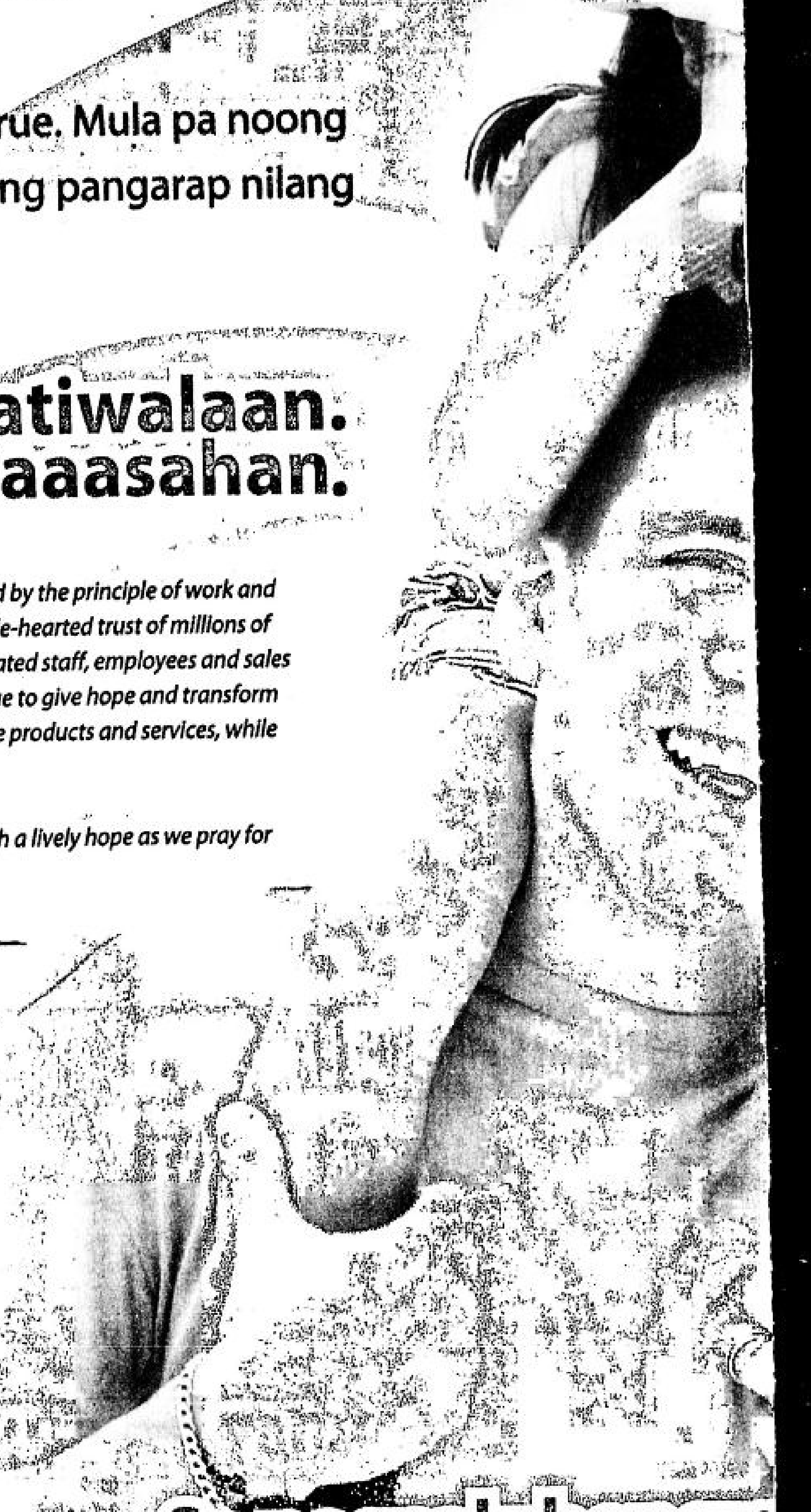

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Noon pa man, ka
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Prudentialife is one big, happy family composed of
also a place where innovation thrives; excellence a

Paglalakbay at pasasalamat

Prudentialife goes on a pilgrimage to the Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage shrine in Antipolo. Isang misang pasasalamat sa tiwala at tatag ang gagawin sa Pinagmisahan Hill.

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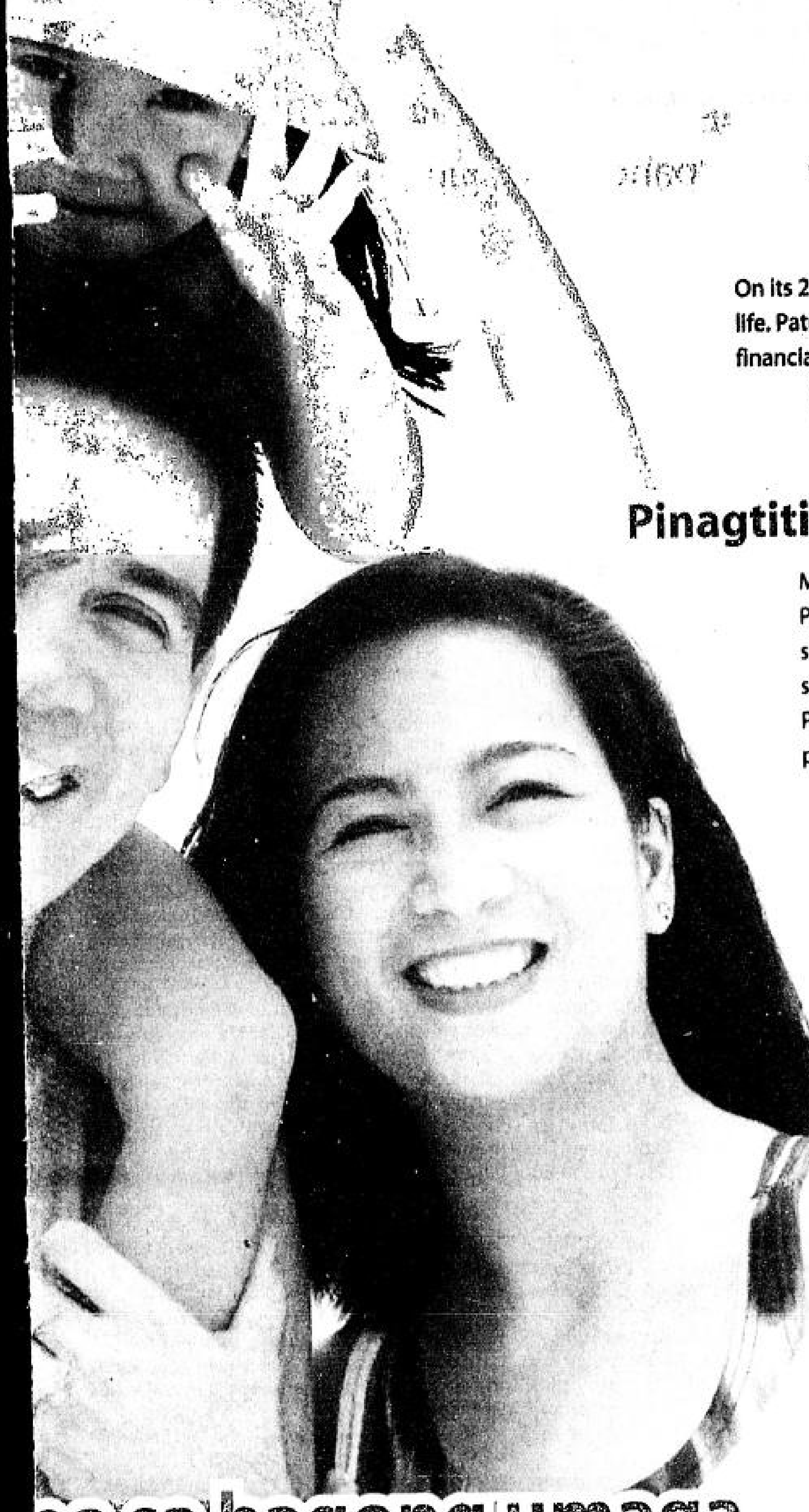

no sa bagong umaga,
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siyahan na namin
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Nagbibigay ilaw at tanglaw sa maayos na kinabukasan.

On its 28th year, Prudentialife moves on to be a beacon of hope for every Filipino who dreams of enjoying the good life. Patuloy na maglilingkod ang Prudentialife sa paghahatid ng maaasahan at makabuluhang pre-need products at financial services sa bawat Pilipino.

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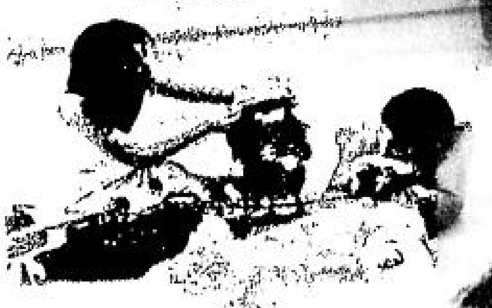

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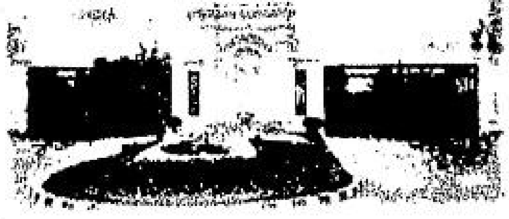

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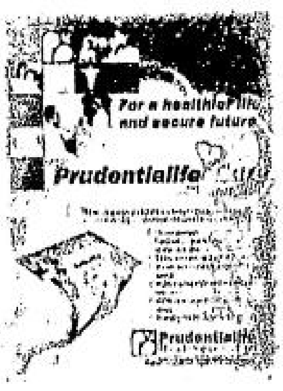

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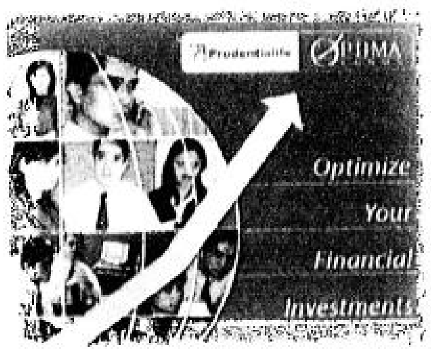

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28th Foundation Activities

May 5	- Pilgrimage to Antipolo
May 7	- Araw ng Kalusugan at Karunungan
May 8	- 2006 PAG-ASA Campaign Launch
May 12	- Kapamilya Day
May 17	- 3rd Silver Tee Golf Charity Open

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OPINION

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Intermission

EDITORIAL

THE RELEASE, SO TO SPEAK, WAS PRECEDED with fireworks. Before dawn on Monday morning, New People's Army rebels strafed a communications tower of Globe Telecom in Sorsogon. The weekend had already seen various skirmishes between the military and communist rebels, with one rebel and three members of "government security forces" killed.

For the Left, all these were but a prelude to the declaration by the so-called "above-ground" party-list organizations that their representatives were leaving the premises of the House of Representatives.

For 70 days, Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño, Rafael Mariano, Joel Virador and Liza Masa lived in a state of siege in the premises of the House of Representatives. State prosecutors had filed charges of rebellion against them. Fearing arrest, they appealed for sanctuary to Speaker Jose de Venecia. They remained confined to the House (except for one instance when Maza darted out to attend a Senate hearing, which had ended by the time she arrived), until a judge deemed the charges without merit, and the National Security Council sent word that the lawmakers wouldn't be arrested soon after government's policy on arrests suffered serious reversals at the hands of the Supreme Court.

The irony of political ideologues insisting on the privileges of membership in the House aside, the ordeal of what have come to be called the "Batasan 5" did raise serious questions, at the time, over the shrinking democratic space in the country, particularly in the face of administration policies aimed at either containing, if not eliminating, organized opposition. As party-list representatives, they represent not just themselves, but the constituencies—national in scope, minority in nature—that elected them. Surely any effort to deprive them of their seats needed to be clearly thought out, and taken with the need to balance the security of the state with the democratic nature of our government in mind.

As with so many decisions taken by the administration at the time (the tumultuous events of Feb. 24-25 and after), the government policy was to arrest first, and think later. The problem with that is that the arrests actually undertaken or merely ordered failed to make sense. When the President is profoundly mistrusted, neither she nor her officials can hope to simply say, "Trust us," to a skeptical public. When the government said there was a serious conspiracy to unseat it, it therefore had to fight on two fronts: in the eyes of the public and in the face of the law.

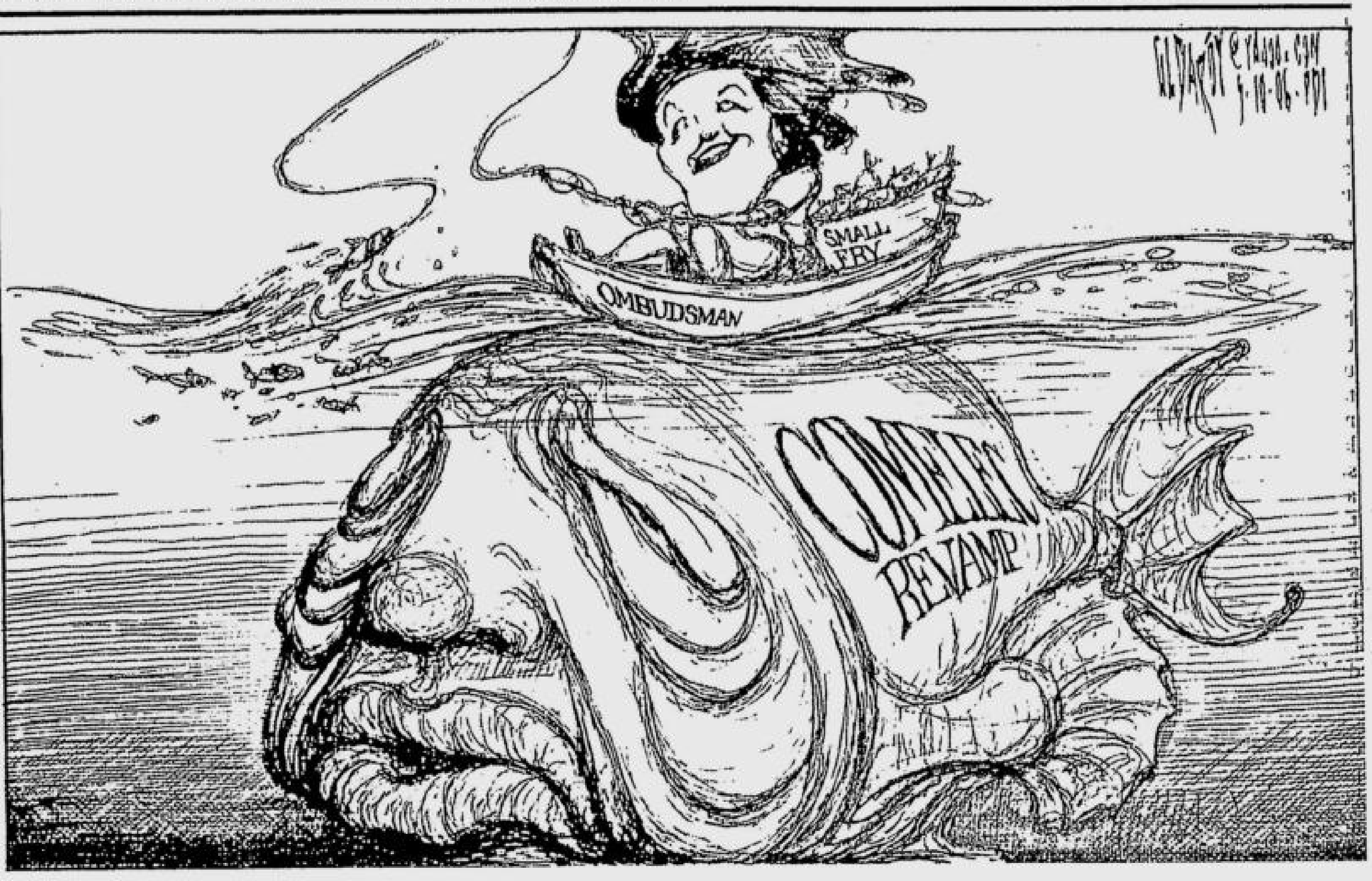
The public didn't riot in the streets in defense of the "Batasan 5," but neither did it unthinkingly applaud the administration's actions. If the Supreme Court has received applause for firmly putting the executive in its constitutional place, then the leadership of the House deserves credit for not handing over five of its members at a snap of the fingers of either the justice secretary or the chief of the Philippine National Police.

The "Batasan 5" can claim a kind of propaganda victory. But in truth, they have been able to leave the confines of the House not due to the majesty of the law, but due to uncharacteristic forbearance on the part of the executive. The President and her Cabinet have reduced some of the pressure on their critics, as we've said, due to reverses before the courts, but also so as to prevent bad publicity during her trip to Saudi Arabia. As the President's trip winds up, the official rhetoric against the "Batasan 5" has escalated. They may have secured their temporary liberty, but one of their colleagues continues to languish in detention.

Indeed, the continuing detention of Rep. Crispin Beltran is the true face of official attitudes toward party-list critics of the government. The merits (or lack of them) of the government's case continue to be studied by the courts, effectively rendering Beltran incapacitated to do his job and do more than issue ritual statements to the media.

The administration has vowed that Beltran's fate will eventually be shared by the "Batasan 5." And who will doubt its word? Where there's a will, there's a way.

That makes the departure of these representatives from their sanctuary in the House only an intermission, before they face another round of prosecution.



Setting the record straight

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

IN THE APRIL 24 ISSUE OF THE INQUIRER was a letter from the presidents of three neighboring subdivisions, who felt alluded to in my April 10 column about some motorists passing through the streets of Mira Nila and Tierra Pura Homes in Quezon City who refuse to pay the required vehicle sticker fees. The stickers are for faster identification of the drivers of the vehicles. Funds from the sale of the stickers are used to pay a small part of the maintenance of the streets and the salaries of security guards manning the gates. The letter-writers resented being called "freeloaders" and "tightwads." They said other things that are either totally false or half-true, and so I think the letter deserves an answer not only to set the record straight but also to help similarly placed subdivisions to understand the issues and thus to be able to solve similar problems.

To begin with, what do you call people who refuse to pay the same amount their neighbors pay to enjoy the same convenience? Aren't they freeloading on what others are paying? What do you call people who pay more than one million for some of their vehicles but find about one peso a day too much to pay for the privilege of driving those vehicles on somebody else's streets?

The letter-writers said they "pay city and national taxes." So does everybody else, but that does not exempt them from paying for the privilege to drive through private property. Others gladly pay for that privilege; only the letter-writers don't.

They said they have "complied with the sticker requirements for more than 10 years." So why do they want to stop now when the situation has not changed? The Mira Nila Homeowners' Association still repairs and keeps the streets in good condition and they continue to wear them down.

They also said they "accept the notion that we ought to contribute in some small way to the upkeep of the roads." So why are you complaining?

"We believe nobody should pay a toll to get home and that roads in the city ought to be public property maintained by the city. But this is not the case," they added.

'Yun pala. So why did they run to city officials to ask them to stop Mira Nila from selling vehicle stickers instead of asking them to maintain the roads so that Mira Nila won't find it necessary to ask them to share a little of what it costs their residents to keep the roads good enough for their use?

When you pass through the North Luzon Expressway or the South Luzon Expressway, you pay a toll. That is because private firms maintain the expressways, not the government. The same thing goes for private subdivision roads.

"The developers of Maries Village and Tierra Gloria paid a lump sum to give village residents the right of way to pass through Tierra Pura and Mira Nila," they said.

I know that, and they still have the right of way. They are still allowed to pass through. But the sticker fees are not for the right of way, they are for the faster identification of the people passing through, and for the upkeep of the roads they are using.

Besides, Mira Nila paid a much bigger lump sum to Tierra Pura for a right-of-way through T.M. Kalaw Street, and its residents still have to buy vehicle stickers from Tierra Pura.

"We ought to distinguish between road use and security. If the homeowners of Mira Nila feel the need to contract so many security guards, then they must pay for them," the letter continued.

Well, we are paying for them without any help from neighboring subdivisions. But the trouble is that unlike most subdivisions which usually have only two gates, we have seven, five of which lead to other subdivisions. Mira Nila would like to close some of the other gates from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. (the time when nobody is likely to pass through but the time when bad elements are active) to save on the salaries of the guards, but its neighbors, the same ones protesting the sticker fees, are also protesting the closure of the gates during the witching hours. So we have to continue having guards there 24 hours a day, at enormous cost to our residents. We are like a rotunda, with one street coming in and many streets radiating out to other subdivisions, each of which has to be guarded.

And here are more reasons for maintaining many security guards: A family, including children, has been massacred in Mira Nila. The city police has not been able to catch the killers. A security guard of Mira Nila was shot and wounded by two men on a motorcycle coming from Maries. The guard fought back and hit one of his assailants. Recently, a man, also coming from Maries, pistol-whipped another security guard who fought back and shot him dead. In another case, a house was fired upon and the culprits escaped in a jeep through a neighboring subdivision.

In the past, a security guard of Tierra Pura was stabbed. In another case, a couple was kidnapped. In Mira Nila, there have been many thefts of side mirrors, hubcaps, bicycles inside yards, etc.

The criminals pass through the other subdivisions, most of which have outlets to Tandang Sora and Luzon Avenue, to enter Mira Nila. And that is why it has to have guards at the gates connecting it to other subdivisions. The police should be protecting the residents, but hardly any policemen patrol there, not even *barangay tanods.* It is largely through the efforts of the homeowners' association and its security guards that criminality has been stopped in Mira Nila. On the other hand, Mira Nila shields its neighboring subdivisions from the squatter colony on the unfinished Congressional Avenue.

(To be continued)

Character

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

SOMEONE WROTE ME SOME TIME AGO saying she pretty much read everything I wrote except the ones about sports. She wasn't interested in sports, she said, and wondered why I didn't consider it, or writing about it, a waste of time.

No, I do not feel I waste my time watching sports, or writing about it, though I must confess now and then I do when I have had a surfeit of it. It makes me feel like a couch potato. Indeed, though I must confess that it sometimes gets in the way of writing columns, as has been the case with the current NBA playoffs which is shown in the mornings, the time of day I devote to writing. Otherwise, I find watching it, and writing about it, a rewarding experience.

It wasn't always so. The last thing I was when I was a kid was athletic; the first thing I was was asthmatic. The athletes in school (well, up to my college years) did little to whet my appetite for it. I recall in particular one quite popular basketball player of my college who was seated next to me in a class demanding to copy my answers in a quiz. The notion of risking flunking if I were caught coming to the aid of a bully of an idiot, or an idiot of a bully, was too much for me. I refused. He looked at me with threatening eyes, but was never able to carry out the threat afterward. It was one of my early lessons in life, one that taught that people who threaten, with word or eye, openly or veiled, normally do not do. It's the ones who do not threaten you've got to watch out for.

But to go back: I got to love sports only much, much later, and only as spectator, not as participant, which should come as an insult to purists who believe that the joy of the thing lies in the sweating. I wish I could excuse that by saying that I'd be happy just to be able to walk like a breeze, never mind fly through the air with the greatest of ease in death-defying trapeze: the gout did come unusually early for me. But it isn't that at all, it's just, well, I like walking in beaches, too, but not plunging into the sea.

This month in particular is a treasure trove of glittering sports events: Bata Reyes has just won the first leg of the San Miguel Pool Tournament in Vietnam, the NBA Playoffs are on, the English and Spanish football wars are being waged, and the French Open is just round the corner. And lest we forget, or be oblivious of it, all roads lead to Munich this June where the 2006 World Cup unfolds. That is an event of earth-shaking moment, though its ripples probably won't reach these shores, its inhabitants thinking the world is riveted on LeBron James.

What lured me to sports is the same thing that lured me to other things, including literature, which is human interest. Contrary to rumor, sports are not just about goals, they are also about souls. They are not just about medals, they are also about character. Indeed, if they have an important lesson to impart to the youth in particular, who are the ones constantly being cajoled into them, not least by the anti-drug campaign, it is about the real meaning of winning. At their best, sports say that you do not win by lying, cheating and stealing. You lie, cheat and steal, you are punished by disqualification, or a ban for life. It is only in this country where when you lie, cheat and steal, you are declared winner, and defended so even after proof to the contrary on the ground that there is no alternative. Sports do have much to teach about life.

The true meaning of winning you see everywhere in sports all the time. I saw a case of it only last week. I thought the Phoenix Suns were finished after Kobe's Lakers pounded them in a game the Suns should have won and left them trailing 1-3. I thought then they would be so demoralized, so rueful, so dispirited, they would be blown off in the next game and dumped in the first round of the playoffs.

I thought, well, they had reached the end of the rope after defying expectations all season, losing their second-best player to injury and inheriting unheralded players to make up for it. But lo and behold, they bucked the odds, turning into a well-oiled machine with no small help from Steve Nash, the Sun whose shine rubs off on everybody, making them look brilliant, and running off near the top of the charts. (Nash by the way was the only NBA player to protest the US invasion of Iraq. A healthy mind in a healthy body? A healthy body in a healthy mind!) And lo and behold, they came back from 1-3 down to win game after game—the sixth game conversely was one the Lakers should have won—and rounded off the feat by drubbing their opponents in the deciding game last Saturday, the likes of which had rarely been seen before.

I don't know how the Phoenix Suns will fare against the Clippers in the second round, or indeed against San Antonio, if they should win. I don't much care. In my book, they've already won, and they're already champions. They've already shown what winning is all about. It isn't about overwhelming the opposition, it's about overcoming adversity. It isn't about being better than everybody else, it's about being better than you've ever been. It's, well, like being a phoenix, rising out of the ashes to soar more loftily into the skies.

The image I have which best explains how I've come to love sports is the one used in the Olympic advertisements, the one that shows a track runner who stumbles near the finish line and clutches his leg, his face a tangle of pain and anguish. He knows he has lost the race. But he picks himself up and, to applause from the stands that builds up to a crescendo and before an audience that has taken to its feet to cheer on a fallen hero, he hobbles his way to the end line.

That is character. That is winning. That is sports.

Back on the economic radar screen

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE NEWS THE OTHER DAY THAT PHILIPPINE stocks soared to their highest index in seven years broke a long spell of politically related news that have been the staple of information for 80 million Filipinos despite recent survey findings that 49 percent of Filipinos considered themselves impoverished compared to 48 percent a year ago.

The stock market surge came as a welcome relief from the flood of newspaper stories related to the series of Supreme Court decisions rolling back the administration's attempts to curtail the political rights of Filipinos. The economic news on the markets was as welcome as the report of the early arrival of La Niña, promising improved agricultural production this year.

The Supreme Court decisions were a cause for celebration among members of a small, urban-based political class composed of opponents of the regime, civil libertarians and lawyers of the triumph of democracy over a burgeoning authoritarianism. The poor people of the country were not reported in the press to have joined the lawyers' rejoicing, and their silence is an ominous symptom of the wide gap in the political values and priorities of the political/middle class and the inarticulate poorer classes. In this prolonged political crisis, that has little to do with filling the stomachs of the Filipino poor, the profile of the poor has completely disappeared from the political radar screen. The presence of the poor in urban protests demanding the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo has been strikingly inconspicuous.

There's no dispute that democracy and political rights are a good thing—they are essential preconditions on which economic progress can be built. But it might be well to remember that Filipinos do not live on democracy, political rights and political news alone. They also have to be able to eat three meals a day, which is the concern of the economy. This is why when there is news of some economic breakthrough, regardless of whether it happens against the background of public revulsion at the administration, the public gets a relief from the heavy imbalance between political and economic news.

During the past many weeks, debate over EO 464 and Presidential Proclamation 1017 has dominated the national agenda. This disproportionate overdose of political news in the media has sidelined economic issues, and it has come to pass that anyone who talks about the economy is criticized as being out of sync with the political mood of the nation.

The optimistic news from the stock exchange brings cheers to a small circle of economists and financial analysts whose voice is usually drowned out by that of politicians, lawyers and detractors of the regime. But sometimes, the economists and financial analysts have to be listened to when they send an economic message. Their message shifts the focus from unproductive engagement in political turmoil and reminds us that economics and politics are intertwined.

The stock market surge suggests that the economy has not only survived the months of battering by political uncertainty but more than that, it has demonstrated resilience to the shocks of political turmoil.

The Philippine Stock Exchange Index two days ago jumped 118.93 points, or 4.8 percent, to 2,589.17. This is said to be the index's best finish since July 13, 1999, when it hit 2,604.49. Striking is that the index has risen 14 percent over the past five trading sessions, prompting an ING investment analyst to say, "This is just the beginning" and that the medium- to long-term trend was up. He added: "This is an indication that, one, finally investors are recognizing the Philippines is back on the radar screen and, two, that the Philippines is an improving story on the macroeconomic front."

Some analysts still view the Philippines as a "laggard" player, and "so, there's probably a lot of catch-up going on right now." But other analysts note that "fundamental factors have started to improve." They point out that the government revenue shortfall has been shrinking because of the increased value-added tax, and it is on track to keeping the budget deficit within the 2006 target limit of P125 billion.

The World Bank has noted the improvement in the government's finances and foresees faster economic growth this year at 5.3 percent, compared to 5.1 percent last year. But in its semestral economic outlook on East Asia, the bank noted that despite two years of economic growth, 17 percent of Filipinos reported suffering hunger compared to 12 percent last year and over 49 percent considered themselves poor compared to 48 percent in 2005.

These data, says the WB report, suggest that "the positive growth performance in the last two years is not perceived to have been widely shared." Some analysts estimate that the economy needs to grow 7 to 8 percent per year to cut poverty significantly.

The Philippines has a brilliant record of political advocacy and dedication to the defense of political rights, as attested to by the production of judicial decisions stemming from presidential decisions curtailing political liberties. The record shows a lopsided emphasis on political rights, subordinating the importance of economic concerns.

But the failure of the economy to empower the poor helps explain their apathy to calls for political action in the cities. The poor cannot relate to middle-class reformist calls for political change. They consider these calls to have no economic meaning to them. So they stay home.

Back to the mountains?

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"THEY SHOULD GO BACK TO THE MOUNTAINS because that is where they belong."

This should join the ranks of memorable political statements, along the lines of "Millionaires don't steal," "Let's call them Mr. X, Y and Z," "We are a rich country pretending to be poor," and of course, "I am sorry."

The way Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez uttered the statement, in a fit of seeming pique, he was either trying to get the goat of the "Batasan 5," at whom the statement was directed, or he was trying to salvage whatever self-respect he could. After all, this was but the latest in a string of legal swipes that the Arroyo administration has had to endure in the last month or so. One really must question the quality of the legal advice the administration has been getting, in the light of successive Supreme Court and lower court reversals. And I think the justice secretary is largely responsible for it. After all, he was the one charged with implementing these legal moves and so must have had a lot to contribute to the decision-making process.

At the height of the dispute over PP 1017, the standard reply of Malacañang to anyone who challenged the legality of the declaration of a state of emergency was "file the appropriate charges and we'll see you in court." Well, that now seems part of a monumental bluff, because when they did face their detractors in court, administration lawyers could do nothing but hang their heads in defeat, try to put a positive spin on the setback and issue mean-spirited declarations about pursuing the cases to the bitter end.

* * *

BUT there's more to Gonzalez's pique than just a brush-off. What was he really saying?

The "Batasan 5" are party-list representatives, using the space opened up by the new system to bring their advocacies and issues to a new venue, the House of Representatives. True, the five come from and maintain links to leftist organizations, and have been prominent fixtures in protests and demonstrations. But in running under the party-list system, and taking their oaths as duly elected representatives, they in effect signaled their willingness to work within the legal political framework, perhaps despite their own personal doubts and cynicism.

Which is why the filing of rebellion charges, some of which date from decades back, was not only legally infirm, but also morally repulsive, because it had all the hallmarks of legal vendetta, of silencing vocal critics by using the law and the threat of incarceration.

So when he tells the party-list representatives, who triumphantly walked out of their House arrest following a lower court decision, to just "go back to the mountains," is Gonzalez saying that the better option for them would be to take up arms against the government? What for did he countenance the filing of rebellion charges against them, when he now urges them to in fact rebel? If, as he threatens, the government will file new and current charges against the five, can they call on Gonzalez as a witness for the defense?

* * *

AND what does Gonzalez mean by declaring that the five ex-Housemates "belong" in the mountains, waging armed rebellion against the government?

Is he saying that once a dissident, always a dissident? That no one can ever escape from the past or the path of rebellion? I think it was a sign of political maturity—for the political system as much as for the Left—that such visible figures were so willing to "play by the rules," so to speak, to abandon or at least largely forego their extralegal struggles for the boring work of legislation, investigation and advocacy. But for the secretary of justice to now urge them to go back to their alleged old ways, that merely confirms whatever doubts and misgiving they and their followers had about joining the "system."

The administration's attitude seems to be that anyone who dares raise a voice of dissent or express an opinion straying from the accepted script is a communist, terrorist or destabilizer. If you're not for GMA, you're against her, and an enemy of the state, as well.

No wonder everyone seems to be losing faith in mainstream politics, or in the ability of government to effect any meaningful reform or social restructuring. And if the few who seem to promise a new or at least different way of governance come under constant attack, then we are dooming ourselves to decades of inertia and despair.

* * *

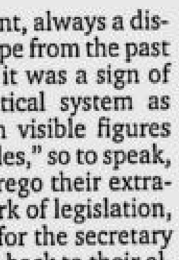
TO THOSE wondering what the judge's decision was in the "Zuma rape case," it was an acquittal for former South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma. Judge Willem van der Merwe ruled that what transpired between Zuma and the accuser, known as "Khwenzi," was consensual sex, noting that the victim had failed to shout or struggle against the man she called "uncle," despite the presence of security guards and Zuma's own daughter in the house.

Khwenzi's supporters expectedly decried the decision as a "setback" for the cause of women, with one supporter saying the judgment sent messages to rape survivors, and the public, that "women make false rape claims, they can't be trusted" and that "they can be subjected to rigorous cross-examination and the law won't protect them."

As has happened in other rape cases here, the judge in the Zuma case made short shrift of expert testimony on the mindset of a woman who is being raped, appearing to put greater value on the failure of the woman to behave in the "expected" way, that is, to shout and run screaming away from the scene of the rape.

In South Africa as in the Philippines, judges still need to be educated on the nuances of post-traumatic stress syndrome, or at least to be humble enough to listen to experts talk on matters on which they have limited knowledge.

Ear piercing



LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

WHEN I ASSIGN STUDENTS TO VISIT MUSEUMS, the reaction is a collective groan. Most of them had been to the same museums when they were in grade school, so why should they revisit the place?

When I see busloads of children from out of town outside the National Museum, I ask for their itinerary. And to my horror, I discover that the highlight of their field trip is not the museum but either a live noontime game show or an afternoon at Megamall. Teachers rush the children through the museum. They have no time to linger over objects that may attract them, no time for questions. They must make their way to the TV studio or shopping mall by noon. No wonder, students have an aversion to museums and do not think it necessary to re-visit the museum more than once in their lifetime.

My college students are sent armed with some primary source documents: an excerpt from Pigafetta's 16th-century eyewitness account of the Magellan expedition, or perhaps the 9th-century Chinese account of a strange people long before they became known as indios or Filipinos. Reading primary source documents in relation to artifacts in a museum makes us contrast our times with the past. At times, we see ourselves as in a mirror, other times we cannot even recognize ourselves in our ancestors.

Reading the multi-volume work of the 17th-century Jesuit Francisco Ignacio Alcina on the Visayas and the Visayans is like watching documentaries on strange tribes on National Geographic or Discovery Channel, except that we only have text rather than visuals. Our imagination is exercised as we try to make sense of Alcina's observations. At times, we wonder whether he is accurate or exaggerating.

Alcina provides a lot of textual detail on the gold ornaments worn by the early Visayans. These descriptions help us make sense of the exhibition of pre-colonial gold in the collection of the Bangko Sentral now on display in a vault under the Metropolitan Museum along Roxas Boulevard. If one just looks at these artifacts, their glitter is basically due to their monetary or gold value. With Alcina, we see context. We are told how and why these ornaments were worn, as well as the stylistic difference in ornaments meant to be worn by men or women. Alcina even noted that gold contrasted very well with our brown complexion, our skin providing a background for the jewelry to glitter more fully.

The Visayans were fond of earrings. From infancy, both men and women had their ears pierced to accommodate two or more gold earrings. Of course, women wore more earrings, bigger pieces than the men, such that Alcina observed: "The lowest piercing was made in the earlobe and, in the course of time, the hole was made so large that, without exaggeration, one could put his entire fist through the opening, so much can flesh grow and enlarge."

Ear piercing is done so quickly and almost painlessly today compared with those times, when the following procedure was followed:

"With a needle made of copper wire, in the pierced hole they would leave a small cord or a kind of a thick thread of cotton until the wound healed, free from swelling or scab (this took several months or even a year). Then with a piece of bamboo or with another type of wood, which does not secrete any humours and is dry, they inserted something like a leaf stalk, which they kept replacing with one that was gradually larger and larger, until it became possible to pass the little finger through the opening. Then they took a leaf from a tree called bariu, about two or three fingers in width and about a fathom or more in length, like the great cat-tails of Spain, but a little more firm, more smooth and polished. They allow it to dry somewhat and then cut a piece of about three fingers more or less, and then roll it up little by little, three or four turns and thus insert it into the hole of the ear. They change this insertion from time to time and each time add several more windings to it. These compressed windings, when inserted into the hole, tend to unroll, creating a force of expansion; with this moderate tension, the opening tend to be enlarged without any seeming sensation or pain. Often as many as 20 windings make up the insert, whence the opening is ready to hold one of these earrings."

That's not even half as fantastic as having holes on the ears big enough to accommodate a fist. Alcina concluded the section on ear piercing thus:

"When the women quarrel among themselves, they reach out for each other's ears and rip them up terribly. Oftentimes, they heal them by bringing the torn portions together and tying them up with certain types of herbs, which aid the healing process quite well. At other times, they remove the torn portions completely and one does not even notice it, because they wear the second earring at all times (for they do not wear the large ones at home, nor even every time they step out, but only when they are fully dressed) and thus they cover up the defect. This is especially true if the fringes are rather long and hang in great quantity like little golden spangles. What more, with the movement of the body or the blowing of the wind, these are made to glisten and thus detract from what has been marred."

I'm glad we live in the 21st century, the past being truly a foreign country.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Juvenile justice

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO THANK UNICEF AND THE Philippine Press Institute for the "Outstanding Column on Children" award they gave me last month. It's the third year in a row that they've given me the award, and this time, it was for a column ("Kids behind bars") which I did last August, focusing on the plight of Filipino children thrown into jail, sometimes held for extended periods without trial.

A week after the awards, I read that the President signed RA 9344 or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006. We should be congratulating Sen. Francis Pangilinan for being so persistent in getting that law passed, a major victory for child welfare advocates. Now the hard work begins, and the first step is to get the public to understand this new law.

Not criminals

Even without detailed implementing rules and regulations, the law is quite comprehensive and could eventually become a model for other countries. Let's look at some of its major provisions:

A Juvenile Justice Welfare Council will be set up to implement the law. This council will be under the Department of Justice, but headed by a Department of Social Welfare undersecretary.

The law is clear in explaining that we are not dealing with criminals. What we have are "children in conflict with the law." A child 15 years old or below at the time he or she commits an offense "shall be exempt from criminal liability." The same provision applies to those aged 15 to 18, but with a difficult provision: "unless he/she has acted with discernment." For serious offenses, the offender could be sent to a rehabilitation center, but definitely not a prison. (The situation was so bad at one time that we even had minors sent to Death Row!)

There are additional safeguards now even for the initial apprehension and investigation. For example, the police are not supposed to display or use firearms, weapons or handcuffs unless absolutely necessary, and only after other methods of control have failed. I have to commend Senator Pangilinan and others involved in drafting this law for being so sensitive to the needs of the young. I've talked with so many young urban poor youth with traumatic memories of handcuffs, for example.

Exemption from criminal liability does not mean total impunity, with provisions for "diversion programs" that will include, among other activities, mediation and conflict resolution, reparation for damages, a written or oral apology and counseling, anger management training, vocational training and community service.

Child-rearing schizos

The new law talks about the role of the family, the educational system, even the mass media in the prevention of juvenile delinquency. We could start by "interrogating" our culture, as it relates to child-rearing.

When it comes to child-rearing practices, we can be quite schizophrenic. We can be very loving, to the point of being excessively indulgent and giving in to whatever the child wants. Yet, I've seen this indulgence alternating with great harshness, often depending on the parent's mood. I know many Filipino parents, very good and kind people, who will insist corporal punishment is necessary for discipline, with the punishment becoming quite extreme. I've seen Filipino children being pinched, slapped, kicked, boxed in public. "Milder" but still reprehensible forms of child discipline involve verbal abuse: I am shocked at how a child is called "*gago*" and "stupid" for the mildest of slip-ups.

To complicate matters, we often resort to the use of external authorities to try to get kids to behave. Note how with younger misbehaving children, Filipino parents will threaten to call the police. With adolescents, parents may actually drag the child to a police station and beg them to jail the child "to teach him a lesson."

Child psychology studies have shown corporal punishment and shaming tactics don't work. The handcuffs, the police and barangay officials' own verbal abuse—these do not help the young to respect the law. Instead, they become even more contemptuous of authority. With young boys raised on machismo values, defying the law might even be seen as a sign of courage and valor.

'Mabait'

Besides looking at the deficiencies in our child-rearing, we also need to interview the children who have already come into conflict with the law and to find out what were the trigger points that turned them into offenders.

My own experience, working with students and with urban poor communities, is that when something goes seriously wrong, it's often an unhappy home environment (often a failed marriage where the couple is forced to stay together) that produces tensions, even hostility. When the child comes into conflict with the law, it's usually a mixture of motives: defiance together with a desperate cry for attention.

There are, too, youthful offenses involving petty theft, and this I blame on a consumerist society where the young, grappling with questions about who they are, begin to believe all those ads that tell them: "You are what your clothes' brand names say you are" or "You are what your cell phone is." I challenge those in the private sector to put their words where their mouth is with regard to "corporate social responsibility" and examine their marketing gimmicks.

And the adults?

As I read RA 9344, I kept thinking, "What about the adults?" Some of the proposed interventions in RA 9344 could be useful for adult offenders, whether in jail or out. Anger management skills is one. Even in the hallowed "civilized" halls of UP, I've had to live in the shadows of faculty and administrative personnel who fly into rage and inflict physical harm, which then results in administrative charges and hearings that just drag on and on for years, making life more difficult for the victims. I've always felt a better solution is to negotiate with these offenders: "Go through psychiatric counseling and we won't file charges."

Helping adult offenders will eventually benefit the young. Think about it: Most of the adult offenders with cases of assault are really little boys who refuse to grow up. And when these guys become fathers, their sons look up to them as role models, picking up the idea that to get your way, you need to rage and to resort to force.

RA 9344 is really a form of affirmative action, addressing a question of class inequity. Let's face it, rich kids don't get thrown into jail. The less fortunate, the poor, are thrown into jail at age 14 or 15. In the company of street-wise, hardened inmates, these kids are condemned for that one raging lapse of judgment, while their richer counterparts just go on to become nastier bullies.

RA 9344 will keep our young out of jail, but they will still have to cope with the harsh realities of home and street life. Juvenile justice will require more than one law and much, much more work with the adults who shape the lives of the young.

One-dish 'cafeteria'

IF YOU WANT A SOCIETY governed by religion, move to Iran. If you can't, then you may want to convince Antonio Montalvan to run for president. In his April 17 column, "Gullibility," Montalvan wrote about the ills of "cafeteria Christianity." Apparently, he has qualms about the idea of choice—choosing if one should worship, who to worship and how to worship—as well as the idea of people defining their own morality as their own God-given mind and conscience dictate. Perhaps, more accurately, he has a problem with people not going along with his chosen beliefs.

I am sure that Montalvan has nothing but the best of intentions, so I shall indulge him by envisioning the kind of Philippines that, possibly, would be more to his liking.

What kind of society would he have us choose? Most likely one where, to borrow the words of Fr. Roy Cimigala, we pursue human development and maturity totally within the forces of religion and faith. Religious totalitarianism?

But which religion? Christianity? Islam? Let us not forget the many denominations and the myriad flavors in which each faith comes. There are so many to choose from—as many as, say, the variety of dishes offered in a large university cafeteria.

But Montalvan thinks the cafeteria paradigm is the devil's work. We should be served only one course, which we must swallow whole and be happy with. Therefore, I shall indulge him further by picking one sect out of the whole mess—Catholicism (the religion of our majority).

What then shall we do with the other ideologies and faiths that do not mix well with Catholicism? They have no place on Montalvan's table. They must therefore be expunged from our schools, our libraries, our televisions and our minds.

And what about that annoying document called the Constitution, with its heretic guarantees of free expression? Of course, throw it into the bonfire together with "The Da Vinci Code." And what of those who are not in line with our enlightened Catholic thought (Muslims, atheists, homosexuals)? Do we have a place for them?

Is this the kind of society we really want? It is fair to say that I am grossly exaggerating the logical extensions of Montalvan's vision.

Montalvan probably just wants a fair amount of religious input in the classrooms, government and media. However, he is also guilty of exaggeration when, in his column, he refers to "The Da Vinci Code" as a "danger." (He probably thinks it at par with Hitler's "Mein Kampf.") His over-the-top reaction to a work virtually everyone acknowledges to be a work of fiction appalled me.

Simply reading a book does not imply that you believe in what it says. Is the Church he seems to represent really that insecure?

—CHUCK SAMSON,
Darkchild_C@yahoo.com

Passé issues and conjectures about SSS

PLEASE ALLOW US TO CORRECT inaccuracies in Conrado Banal III's column titled "Walk in the perks." (PDI, 4/11/06) It is unfortunate that we have to keep making this kind of corrections in the INQUIRER, the country's leading newspaper.

The column discussed Social Security System president and chief executive officer Corazon de la Paz's supposed stand on the proposal of Banco de Oro to merge with Equitable PCIBank (EPCIB).

1. "Unlike the GSIS ... the SSS has no interest whatsoever to make the best of OUR billions of pesos sank in EPCIB and the Palace is tolerating it."

This statement is sweeping and unfair. The SSS was the first institution to signify its interest to sell its shares in EPCIB in order to reinvest the proceeds in safer and higher-yielding treasury bills. Our move sparked renewed interest in the bank, which has resulted in the appreciation of its share price.

2. "But the president of SSS, Corazon de la Paz, loves the takeover-disguised-as-a-merger proposal of the SM group. She does not want the SSS to join the bidding."

The issue about the SSS allegedly supporting the merger is passé. No use beating a dead horse. The merger proposal was never discussed in the EPCIB board and the date in which the EPCIB board must decide has lapsed. If a merger will ever happen, it might be with another bank and not necessarily with BDO.

3. "I don't buy this studying-the-options BS at all. Methinks that the SSS boss wants the SSS to keep its investments in the bank, whether EPCIB or BDO, to keep the perks."

The statement is pure conjecture. The SSS has been very vocal in its stand that it wants to dispose of its shares in EPCIB, starting with the transaction it entered with BDO in December 2003.

4. "Moreover, she still has to deliver on her promise to audit the P16 billion in missing EPCIB funds—the money that the Go family used to pay for the old PCIBank."

EPCIB's Audit Committee is reviewing a report concerning the alleged P16-billion obligation of the Go family to the bank as a result of the merger of Equitable and PCIBank. The committee is expected to present its report any time soon.

Banal has been unfairly critical about the overseas trips of De la Paz in connection with her position as president of the Geneva-based International Social Security Association (ISSA), the biggest association of social security organizations in the world, which has 350 members from 150 countries.

The SSS does not spend money on those trips even though they were approved by the Social Security Commission and the Department of Finance. As ISSA president, she is expected to participate in international meetings and various fora on social security issues such as pension reforms, health and safety at work, investment of pension funds, migration and women and children.

—JOEL P. PALACIOS,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman,
Quezon City

The way to straighten crooked officials

I WANT TO SAY MY TEN CENTS' WORTH ON Jo Smith Medina's reaction to Conrado de Quiros' column titled "Thank God for Theresa Pangilinan."(PDI, 5/2/06)

I disagree with Medina. She said Pangilinan "graduated without learning basic good manners and right conduct." I admire her for expressing her dissatisfaction with the President in a very bold manner. What she did took lots of courage. It takes courage to fight corruption in high places. Shenanigans in government, including electoral fraud, must not be tolerated, and if heckling crooked public officials is what it will take to stop them in their tracks, then we should be willing to put our lives on the line.

Do you think corrupt government officials will turn away from their crookedness if we try to persuade them with kind words only? Not a chance! That would be like talking to a brick wall, or spitting into the wind.

We should thank Pangilinan. We need more people like her.

—BILL SABALBURO, cacio123@yahoo.com

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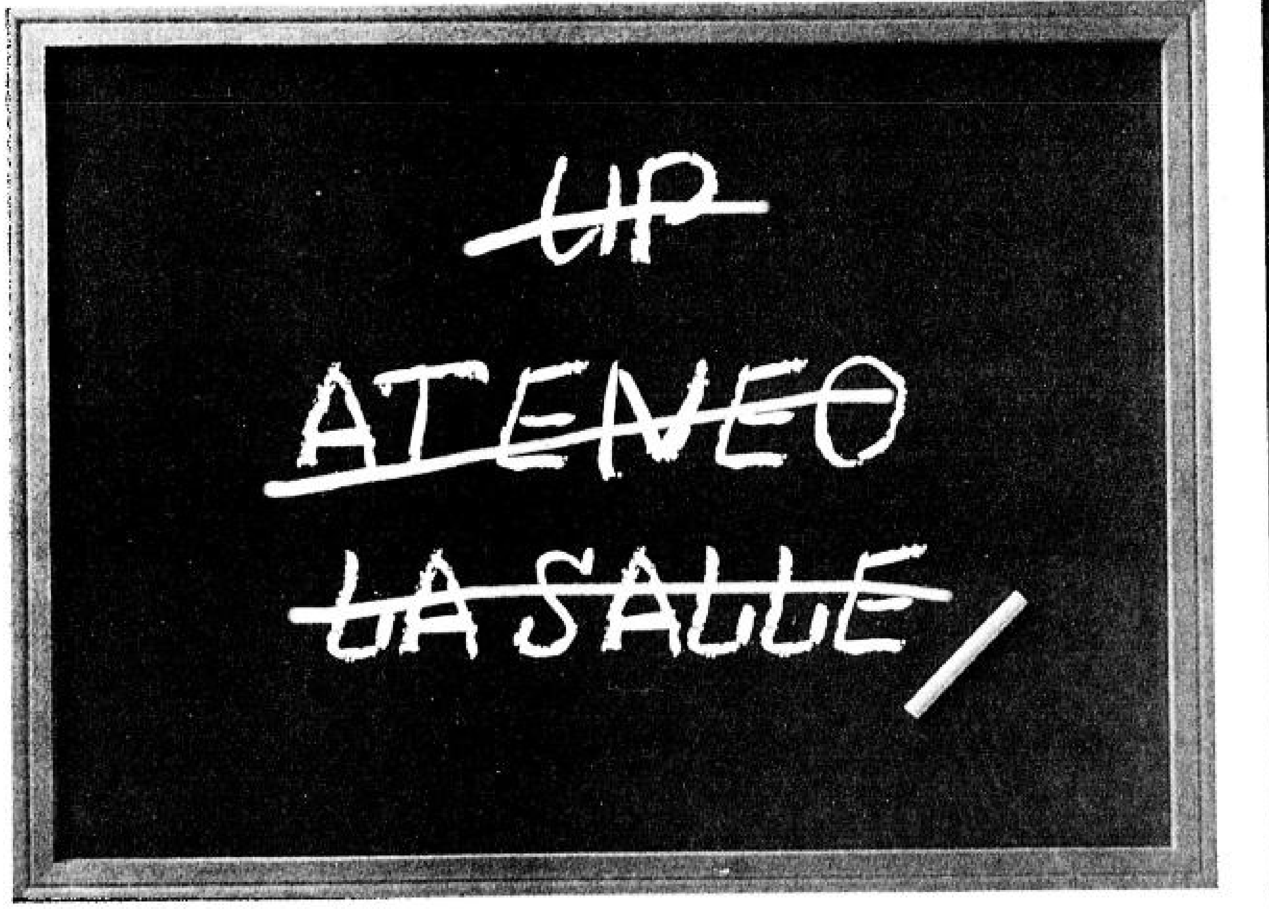

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Saga of Golden Buddha won't simply fade away

By Delmar Cariño
Baguio City

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS after it was found in a tunnel near a hospital in Baguio City, the Golden Buddha and the controversy it has generated simply refuse to fade away.

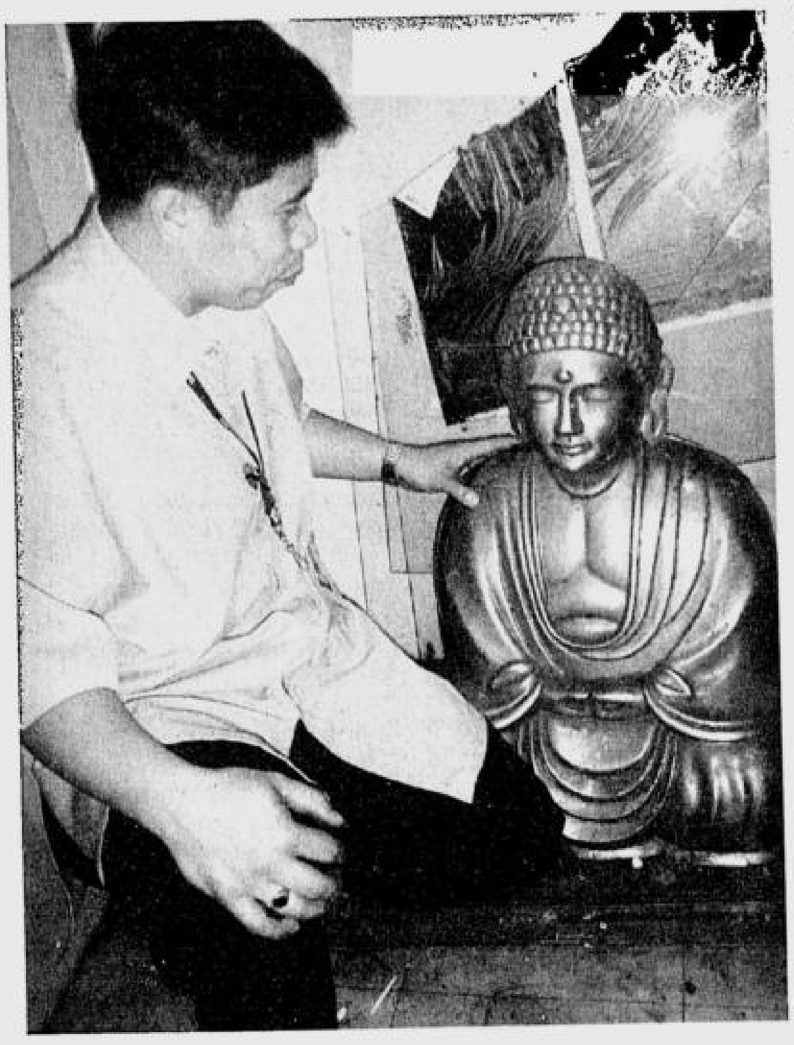
Its discovery promised wealth and fame for its finder, the late Rogelio Roxas, a locksmith-turned-treasure hunter, but the legal and family squabbles that followed spoiled what could have been a life of fortune for his family.

The recent decision of a US court that human rights victims of the late President Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorial regime should share in the damages that the Roxas heirs could get has opened old wounds, both legal and personal.

Golden Buddha Corp. (GBC), which Roxas and his foreign partners established in 1986, is locked in a multimillion-dollar damage suit against the Marcos estate in US soil.

Marcos was believed to have masterminded the Golden Buddha's seizure from Roxas' house in Aurora Hill in Baguio City on April 5, 1971.

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in California ruled last week that the 9,539 human rights victims under Marcos' rule were entitled to partake from $35 million to $40 million in damage compensation to Roxas' heirs.



THE CONTROVERSIAL "Golden Buddha" now in the custody of a Baguio court has spawned court battles invoking the government, a group of treasure hunters and the heirs of its finder, Rogelio Roxas.
DELMAR CARIÑO

Not a setback

Roxas' son Henry and brother Danilo did not consider the ruling a setback but wished that the cases GBC filed against the Marcoses would be resolved soon.

"I will leave it to our lawyer on what to do with the decision. My father suffered much because of the Buddha and I hope justice would soon be given to us," Henry, 38, said.

Lawyer Daniel Cathcart of the Magana, Cathcart and MacCarthy law firm based in San Francisco, California, is representing GBC and Roxas' heirs in the civil suit against the Marcos estate.

"As long as our claims [are] finally recognized and we will be compensated properly, we do not mind sharing with the human rights victims," Danilo said.

The INQUIRER interviewed Henry and Danilo separately on Monday and Tuesday, as both have not spoken for more than a year. Henry said he and his uncle could not see eye to eye on the Golden Buddha issue.

But Judge Antonio Reyes of the Baguio Regional Trial Court admitted that the US court ruling was in conflict with a decision he issued on May 30, 1996.

Reyes then declared that the bronze-plated statuette in the court's custody in Baguio was the same item that Rogelio found in 1971.

"The US court's decision appears to imply that the Golden Buddha existed and I really do not know how the conclusion was arrived at and what [pieces of] evidence were presented," he said.

Recalling the proceedings before his court, Reyes said there was an admission that Rogelio's find was not really gold.

"The mere fact that a petition was filed in court to claim the bronze statuette was an indication that indeed no Golden Buddha existed," he said.

Reyes was very emphatic: "The government has vast resources under its control and surely it could have found the Golden Buddha it if really existed."

Told that the real statuette was allegedly melted into gold bars and became part of the Marcoses' hidden wealth abroad, Reyes said: "That's only a theory since no hard evidence had been shown. It is speculative."

He said the conflict brought about by the US court decision could affect rules on international law but stressed that court decisions were "territorial," meaning decisions are only enforceable in the country where the decision was issued.

He surmised though that the US ruling could have merely categorized Rogelio in the class of human rights victims and that it had nothing to do with the existence of the Golden Buddha.

The statuette in the court's custody was surrendered by lawmen days after Rogelio complained that his Golden Buddha had been seized.

Rogelio, who died in 1993, claimed that the statuette that was returned was a replica.

Detachable head

It did not have a detachable head and a hollow torso unlike the Buddha he found in 1971, he said.

The Buddha was made of gold and its torso contained pieces of jewelry, Rogelio said of his statuette believed to be part of the war booty of Japanese Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, the acknowledged "Tiger of Malaya."

The statuette gained new interest in 1995 when Jose Roxas, Rogelio's eldest brother and a locksmith in Olongapo City, petitioned the court to release the statuette to him as a memento of Rogelio's treasure hunting days.

But Jose, 71, earned the ire of his siblings and nephews Henry and brother Gervic, when he declared in court that Rogelio never found a Golden Buddha.

Jose, who had been accused of conspiring with former First Lady Imelda Marcos to spread the yarn on the statuette, is still disputing with Henry and Gervic the right to bring home the Golden Buddha now in the Baguio court's custody.

AT A GLANCE

- The Hawaii First District Court awarded $22 billion to the Roxas family in July 1996. A higher court, however, reversed the decision, saying the evidence against Marcos was too speculative to support the claim that he seized the Golden Buddha.
- The Golden Buddha Corp. filed an interest in the case of Merill Lynch v. Arelma concerning the Roxas' claim for a share of the $1.9 billion in damages awarded by Hawaii Judge Manuel Real in 1991 to human rights victims of the Marcos regime.

Former Judge Bernabe Calimlim of Malasiqui, Pangasinan, filed a case against the GBC for compensation on his efforts in helping Rogelio Roxas devise ways of seeking relief against Marcos who was then exiled in Hawaii.

- The bronze statuette in the custody of the Baguio City Regional Trial Court became the tug of war of the following parties when the RTC was hearing the case filed by Jose Roxas:

Office of the Solicitor General that claimed the statuette could be part of the Marcoses' hidden wealth that has not been assessed property taxes.

Albert Umali, president of the Treasure Hunters Association of the Phil. Inc., who claimed that Rogelio Roxas had signed an agreement waving his rights over the statuette to THAPI.

Jose Roxas who wanted the statuette as a memento of brother Rogelio Roxas' treasure hunting activities.

Henry Roxas and Gervic Roxas, sons of Rogelio Roxas, who wanted the statuette as remembrance of their father. But they maintained it was a fake Golden Buddha.

- The Presidential Commission on Good Government said that if the Golden Buddha existed, the government would be entitled to it pursuant to laws.

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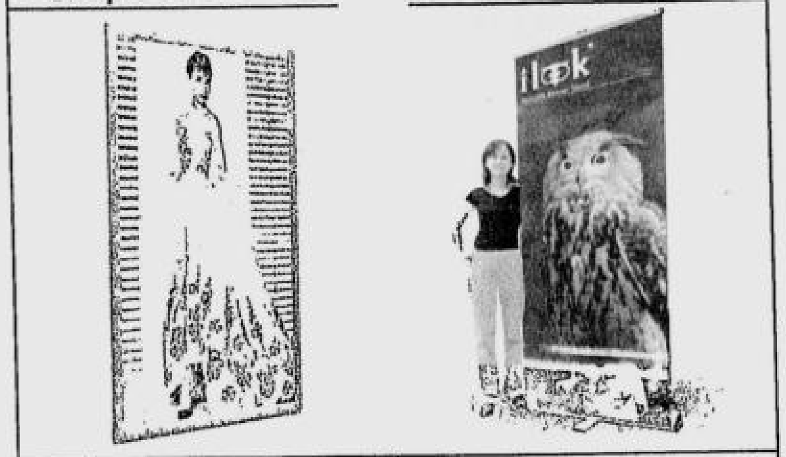

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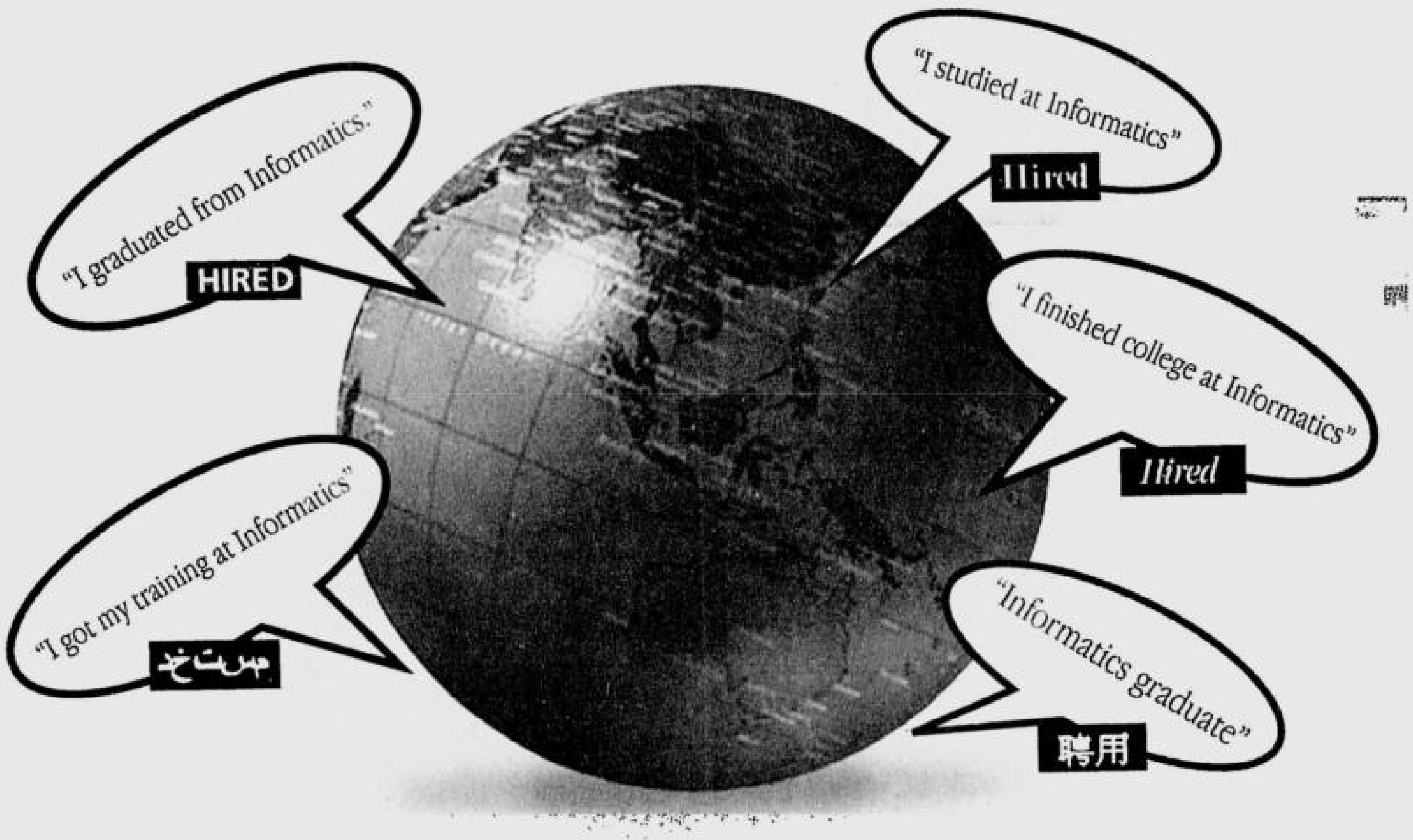
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PNP chief confirms 'jueteng' return

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE CHIEF OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE confirmed the resurgence of the illegal numbers game jueteng and ordered reactivated an anti-gambling task force dissolved early this year.

Nearly half of text messages he had received during the last few days were complaints on the revival of jueteng, according to Director General Arturo Lomibao.

Some of the complaints came from clergymen, he said.

"Yesterday, I have (ordered) the reactivation of the anti-jueteng task force, which would be handled by the CIDG (Criminal Investigation and Detection Group)," he told reporters.

"We'll reinvigorate our campaign (against jueteng)," he added.

The CIDG is the Philippine National Police's primary investigative arm.

Before its dissolution in the first quarter of 2006, the Anti-Illegal Gambling Task Force was under the PNP-Operations Center. The task force had recommended the relief of dozens of provincial and city directors, town police chiefs, and precinct commanders.

It was deactivated when Small Time Lottery, bankrolled by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, was given the go-signal to conduct test runs in Luzon. Anti-gambling crusaders warned that jueteng lords would use STL as a cover for their operations.

Although Lomibao did not directly blame the operation of STL, he said jueteng operators appeared to be riding in its back.

Lomibao said jueteng operators have apparently made STL a "front" for their illegal activity.

It is also possible that people have mistaken STL for jueteng because of their similarities, he said.

It was also possible that STL's collectors are simply former jueteng collectors.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Isabela gov says PNP war on 'jueteng' farce
- Army probes safety pass issued Sayyaf man
- Mt. Province ideal for wind energy

Opposition to STL grows as police smell 'jueteng'

THE FACE OF SMALL TOWN LOTTERY (STL), the government-sponsored betting game designed to replace jueteng, is being unmasked.

A bishop in Bulacan was added to the growing list of Church leaders who are protesting the operations of STL just as police in Quezon arrested 29 supposedly STL workers who were suspected of actually collecting bets for jueteng.

"We do not need gambling in Bulacan," said Bulacan Bishop Jose Oliveros, who added his voice to the growing clamor to stop STL.

He said he made known his stand to Bulacan officials who sought his opinion on STL in the province.

"Gambling, whether legal or illegal, should be discouraged in the context of our Philippine situation. The poor are always the losers in such a setup. It encourages the wrong attitude towards work because it brings false hopes to the people," he said.

But Oliveros said his position against STL is his personal stance and does not reflect that of his diocese.

"To come publicly on the matter needs further consultation from our priests and the people in general. As of now, the CBCP pastoral letter stands," he said.

STL has been operating in Bulacan for about two weeks now.

Guiguinto Mayor Ambrocio Cruz, president of the League of Municipalities in Bulacan, said the STL started its dry-run in the towns of Guiguinto, San Ildefonso, Pandi, Sta. Maria and San Miguel on April 27.

Cruz said the Diamond Gaming and Research Center Corp. (DGRCC) runs the game in Bulacan.

Cruz said they welcomed the STL operations because the 10-percent share of local governments from its proceeds would help sustain the needs of their people.

But Cruz said he would not go out of his way to encourage his constituents to patronize the STL. "We will allow the people to decide. We will just accept what will be given to us as the municipal government's share," he said.

In Quezon, police arrested the 29 STL workers in the residential compound of Raul Umali, mayor of Tiaong town.

Senior Insp. Nathaniel Villegas, head of the arresting team, said the 29 were arrested in Villa Rosario Subdivision, where Umali's house is.

Umali denied that he was running an illegal numbers game in his residence.

"What they wrongfully raided was the local STL (Small Town Lottery) station in my town. All the persons they arrested were legal STL employees. And that was not my house but my mother-in-law's," Umali said in a phone interview.

He said the STL franchise holder in Quezon has been paying his mother-in-law P300 a day for office space.

But Villegas said the arrested men and women were not employees of STL but collectors of "bookies."

"From our list of towns with STL operations, Tiaong was not included," Villegas said.

Romy Quiñones, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office manager for special projects, said the STL operation in Quezon covers the province's 40 towns.

The PCSO granted the provincial franchise for the STL operation to Pirouette Corp. based in Manila.

The company was allowed by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan to operate the STL through Resolution No. 2005-676 dated Oct. 3, 2005.

Lawyer Cezarito Villariba, counsel of Pirouette, assailed the raid.

"That's an illegal raid ...," he said.

Villegas said most of the arrested suspects did not have ID cards issued by the PCSO.

"It's easy to manufacture fake ID's," he said.

Leopoldo Pangan, who introduced himself as Pirouette's representative in Tiaong and one of the arrested suspects, said the ID cards were still being processed.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk and Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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ROUNDUP

Drivers seek fare hike

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GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Jeepney drivers and operators here are asking for a P1.50 fare hike. They said they needed the increase to defray increasing costs of fuel. Orly Sabelita, chair of the Confederation of Transport Cooperatives (Contraca), the biggest transport cooperative in the Central Mindanao region, said the petition has been submitted to the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board. The proposed minimum fare for the first four kilometers is P8, and an additional P1 for every succeeding kilometer. The current minimum fare here is P6.50 for the first four kilometers. *Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

6 nabbed for theft

COTABATO CITY—Police arrested six persons while they were allegedly robbing two female workers of a videoke on Notre Dame Avenue here Friday. City police spokesperson Senior Insp. Samson Obatay said Ali Haron, Roel Prado, Morris Abdula, Nur Mamalankas, Odin Mama and Joel Raotan were arrested by policemen who happened to pass by while the suspects were robbing Ailen Henry-Jalandoni and May Bacog. Seized from the suspects were a wristwatch, cash and a toy gun. The group's leader escaped.

Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

85 scholarships for ex-rebs

DAVAO CITY—At least 85 scholarship slots are still available for former rebels or their relatives, who are planning to pursue college degrees, Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza said. The scholarship program is on its fifth year. The study program, which is open to former members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front-New People's Army (CPP-NPA-NDF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) or their relatives, comes with an annual fund of P10,000 for each beneficiary.

PDI Mindanao Bureau

1 dies in Quezon mishap

LUCENA CITY—One person died and three others were injured after a bus rammed a tricycle along the Maharlika Highway in Lopez, Quezon on Thursday. Police identified the fatality as Anthony Valencia, 29, an employee of Magsaysay Memorial Hospital in Lopez. The tricycle driver and the passengers, who suffered serious injuries, were taken to a local hospital, where Valencia died. The bus driver did not stop and went on to Bicol. The bus also hit a parked cargo truck, injuring a bystander.

Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Bicol journalist dies

LEGAZPI CITY—Veteran Bicol journalist and INQUIRER contributor Carlos S. Gegantoca, 68, died on Friday. Tio Caling, as he was fondly called, was a past president of the Albay-Legazpi Press Association Inc. and a professor at the Bicol University Graduate School. He had written several books and was also a columnist of the Bicol Chronicle and the Weekly Digest. He is survived by wife Erlinda, daughter Caroline and son-in-law Lupo Rojas Jr., and sisters Lilia, married to Angel Real, and Nena, married to Cesar Casilao. His remains lie at the Nuestra Sra. de Salvacion in Barangay Bonot in this city. Interment is at 2 p.m. on May 13 at the Bicol Memorial Park.

Albay delegation to China

LEGAZPI CITY—Albay will host a delegation from the People's Republic of China to the 31st Unesco-International Theater Institute World Congress to be held on May 17-31 in Metro Manila. Other country delegations will be hosted by other key cities and provinces in the country where workshops on arts and culture will be held. Albay officials will welcome the visiting Chinese artists at the Peñaranda Park here, while theater and arts aficionados from different schools, local government units and private organizations in Albay are expected to join the Chinese workshops.

PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Isabela gov slams police 'farce' on 'jueteng'

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ILAGAN, ISABELA—GOV. MARIA Gracia Cielo Padaca on Tuesday denounced the supposed "farcical campaign" of the local police against the illegal numbers game jueteng, which returned in the province last month.

Padaca lamented the slow responses of Director General Arturo Lomibao, Philippine National Police chief, and Chief Supt. Jefferson Soriano, Cagayan Valley police director, to her repeated pleas to stop jueteng in the province.

"I called up General Lomibao and he said [he] would act on it. That was last Wednesday. I think [Lomibao] has already talked to General Soriano, but I wonder why it's still the same situation. Jueteng has not been stopped," she said.

Padaca assailed the local police's excuse of citing arrests of bet collectors in justifying their campaign against illegal gambling.

"What's this? A show [with] a script? I was not born yesterday. I don't buy their style of going after the *cobradores* (bet collectors)," she said.

"I do not believe that the approach should be to go after the *cobradores*. Jueteng is simply controlled by just one group, why don't you [in the police] deal with them?" Padaca said, recalling her conversation with Soriano.

She suspected that the recent designation of Senior Supt. Oscar Fiesta, acting Isabela police director, was made purposely to allow the resumption of jueteng in the province after a year of absence.

"I told General Soriano that the impression of the people [of Isabela] is that Fiesta brought with him jueteng to the province," she said.

Padaca showed the INQUIRER transcripts of text messages sent to him by residents, confirming jueteng bet collections in at least 10 towns and in Cauayan City. She said she started receiving the messages two days after Fiesta assumed office.

Soriano, however, said the recent reassignment of about 100 policemen to the coastal towns of Palanan, Divilacan, Maconacon and Dinapigue had slowed local police operations against jueteng.

"We had to pull out personnel from various police stations to augment the forces in highly critical areas, in anticipation of another rebel attack," Soriano said.

He said Lomibao sent a special operations team from the PNP headquarters in Camp Crame to launch a crackdown on jueteng in Isabela.

"We will spare no one in this campaign," Soriano said.

Fiesta said the police had been conducting a "sustained and all out" campaign against the illegal numbers game.

He said they were raiding reported venues of jueteng bet collections and draws, but what policemen discovered were activities of collectors of EZ.2, a government-sanctioned lottery.

PADACA

VILLAMOR VISAYA JR./PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

WOMEN of Jones town in Isabela take part in street dancing contests to celebrate the province's 150th founding anniversary.

Mayors' boycott won't stop Isabela festival

ILAGAN, ISABELA—THE WEEK-long celebration of this province's 150th founding anniversary started on Sunday despite the non-participation of 20 towns supposedly initiated by mayors not allied with Gov. Maria Gracia Cielo Padaca.

Alicia Mayor Napoleon Dy, who is also the president of the Isabela Mayors League, said he and the other mayors discussed the boycott to show their sentiments on the alleged lack of concern of the provincial government over some pressing issues.

"At first, we were very cooperative in dealing with the provincial leaders, but we were left out groping in the dark," he said. He, however, clarified that most mayors did not participate due to conflicting schedules with their town fiestas.

Dy's brother, Cauayan City Mayor Caesar Dy, however, said he was not amenable to the consensus of most mayors, claiming that the "issue in the celebration is not the person but the public interest."

He said the city government joined in the sports contest to show that they were not among those who boycotted the festivities.

Unfazed, Padaca urged Isabelinos to stand together "to both honor the past and go on with the challenges of the future."

"We should eternally thank our forefathers for the good things they have done for our province. All of us who are gathered here in this once-in-a-lifetime event play a vital role in our history," she told about 4,000 residents who attended Thursday's opening ceremonies at the newly renamed Gov. Melanio Singson Memorial Sports Complex in Barangay Alibagu here.

Padaca said the sports complex was being renamed to honor former Gov. Melanio Singson, who was once this province's congressional representative and justice secretary.

"I ask all of you that we make the best of this role that we have in the province's history. We have already learned our lessons from the past; let us not forget these lessons," she added.

The event's opening activity featured, among other events, a street-dancing competition and a trade fair and exhibit showcasing the towns' various products and tourist attractions.

Padaca told the INQUIRER that her political differences with some of the mayors and the botched operation of Small Town Lottery had gotten in the way of the milestone celebration.

She belittled the absence of the town mayors.

"In fairness, Isabela is not the mayors alone. Even if their (local government) is not here, civil society and non-government organizations and the people themselves are here," she said.

She cited the participation of schools and other government agencies, as well as of groups from the private sector, that, despite the absence of the mayors and town employees, had shown strong support for the celebration.

"Besides, since I became governor, it was always the people—the Isabelinos—who are important to me, not the politicians," she added.

Napoleon Dy, however, denied that politics and STL were behind the supposed boycott.

"We (in the LMP) are even trying to unite the relationship between the (provincial government) and the mayors, but some of the mayors feel that they are not being accepted," said Dy, brother of former Gov. Faustino Dy Jr., Padaca's political arch rival. *Villamor Visaya Jr. and Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Mt. Province tagged ideal site to generate power through wind

BONTOC, MT. PROVince—Local officials have identified Mt. Province as a source of wind energy which can provide electricity for the province and nearby areas.

Thomas Killip, presidential assistant for Cordillera affairs, said some Japanese investors visited the country to look at potential wind energy technology in Northern Luzon, particularly Mt. Province.

In a study conducted in the 1990s by a team, led by former Energy Undersecretary Rufino Bomasang, Sagada, Besao and Tadian towns, all in Mt. Province, were identified as potential areas for wind energy, Killip said.

"There is wind throughout the year in these areas ... In wind energy, the constant flow of the wind is more important and not its strength," he said.

Robert Pangod, researcher of the Montañosa Resource and Development Center (MRDC), said the entry of new and renewable energy sources in the provinces should be supported because they were sustainable, economical and environment friendly.

A non-government organization in Mt. Province, the MRDC is a prime mover of microhydro technology. It has installed microhydro dams in Mt. Province, Kalinga, Ifugao and Abra.

"Any kind of alternative energy, such as solar or wind power, should be supported because they are more sustainable. For now, wind energy is becoming more and more popular," Pangod said.

He said his group was studying the feasibility of wind power in Mt. Province. He said the research on wind energy was inspired by the sustainability of wind farms in Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte, which generate 500 watts of electricity.

One of the sites where a wind turbine could be set up is Lake Danum in Sagada, he said. The turbine could generate 20 megawatts, which is more than enough to light the entire province.

A Department of Energy report said the best wind resources were found in Batanes and the Babuyan Islands; Ilocos Norte; the higher interior terrain of Luzon, Mindoro, Samar, Leyte, Panay, Negros, Cebu, Palawan, eastern Mindanao and adjacent islands; coastal areas from Northern Luzon to Samar; wind corridors between Luzon and Mindoro, including Lubang Island; and between Mindoro and Panay, including Semirara, and Cuyo Island. *Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Reyes fires 2 DENR men in Surigao

BUTUAN CITY—ENvironment Secretary Angelo Reyes sacked two ranking environment officials in Surigao del Sur following last month's series of raids on a politician's property that yielded some 11,500 pieces of illegally cut logs.

Benjamin Tumaliuan, Caraga environment chief, said Diego Escaño, provincial environment and natural resources officer, and Philip Calunsag, the community environment and natural resources officer of Lingig town, had been served their walking papers last week and are now being investigated.

Tumaliuan said Escaño and Calunsag had been accused of laxity in the drive against illegal logging.

On April 9, the two environment officials joined a raid on a farm owned by Lingig Mayor Roberto Luna Jr. *Franklin Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Army to probe pass given Sayyaf man

ZAMBOANGA CITY—THE MILITARY'S Southern Command said it would investigate the alleged issuance of a safe conduct pass to a suspected member of the Abu Sayyaf.

Col. Antonio Supnet, Southcom chief of staff, said he would discuss the report with Maj. Romulo Quemado, Military Intelligence Group 9 commander.

"I will ask him about this, because we from the AFP are not supposed to release any pass to any Abu Sayyaf member," Supnet said.

Two weeks ago, local journalist Ronan Lomongo distributed photocopies of an alleged safe conduct pass issued to Sparle Amiruddin, alias Abu Omar, that was valid from March 7 to April 7, by the Military Intelligence Group.

Amiruddin was arrested on April 24, 18 days after the pass expired.

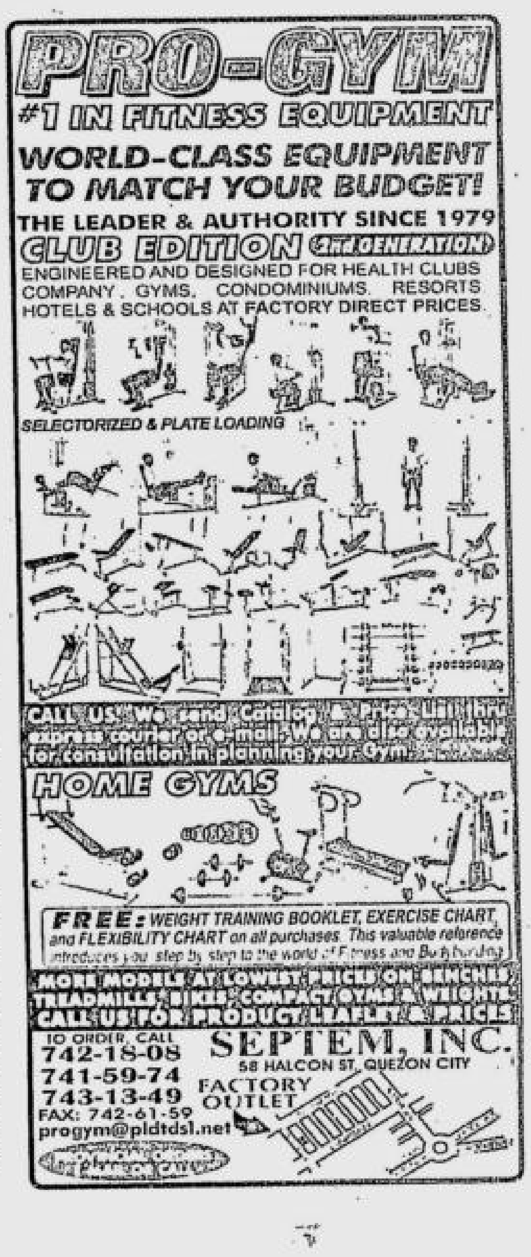
"We will investigate if, indeed, there's truth to that," Supnet said, requesting media to give him a copy of the safe conduct pass.

Quemado earlier denied issuing any safe conduct pass. He said if indeed Amiruddin possessed one, it was fake.

Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong confirmed to the INQUIRER that operatives of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) have sought refuge in his province in January.

"*Talagang may JI dito*. In fact, it was A-1 information. I even sent my trusted informant to verify the report," Loong said.

Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau



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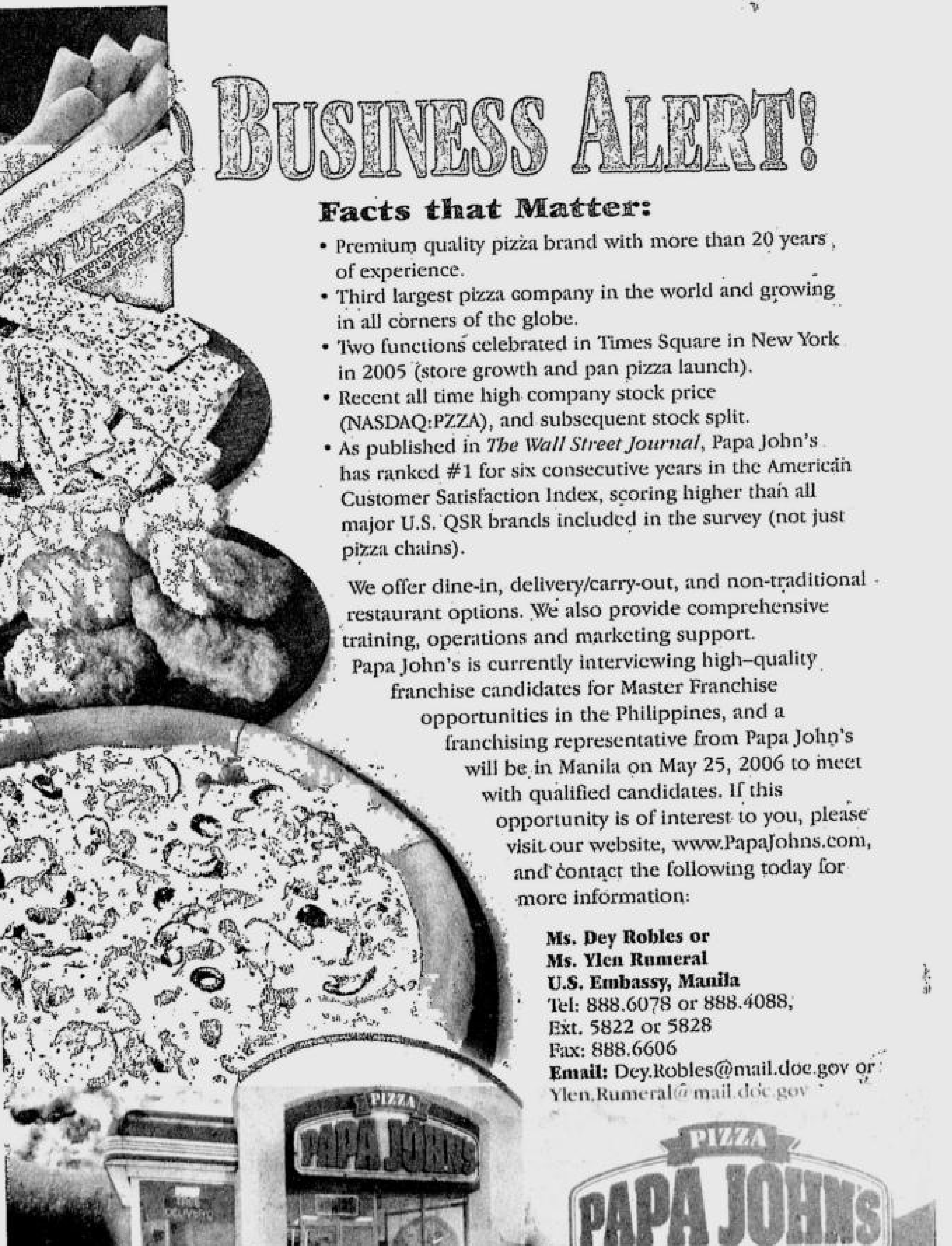

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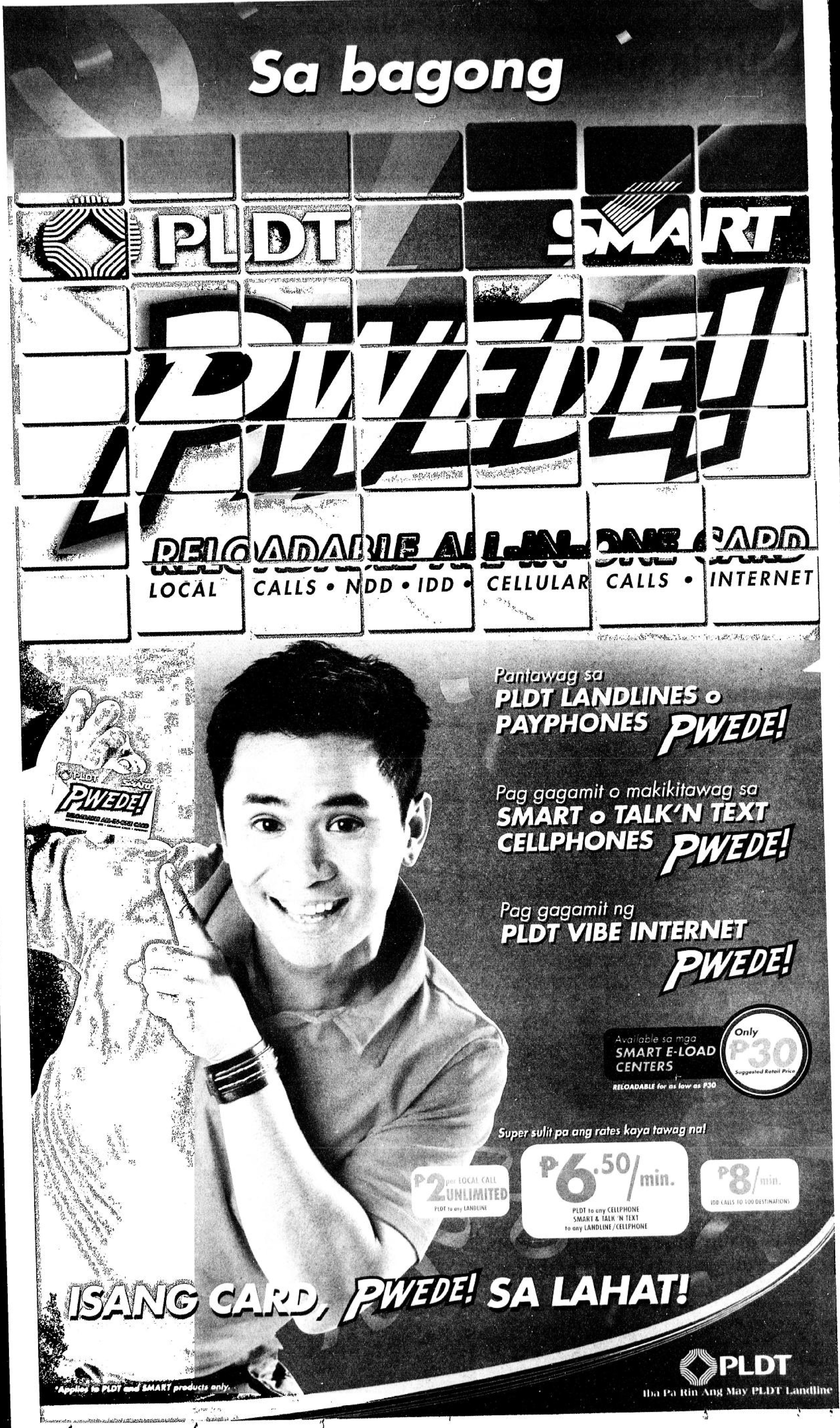

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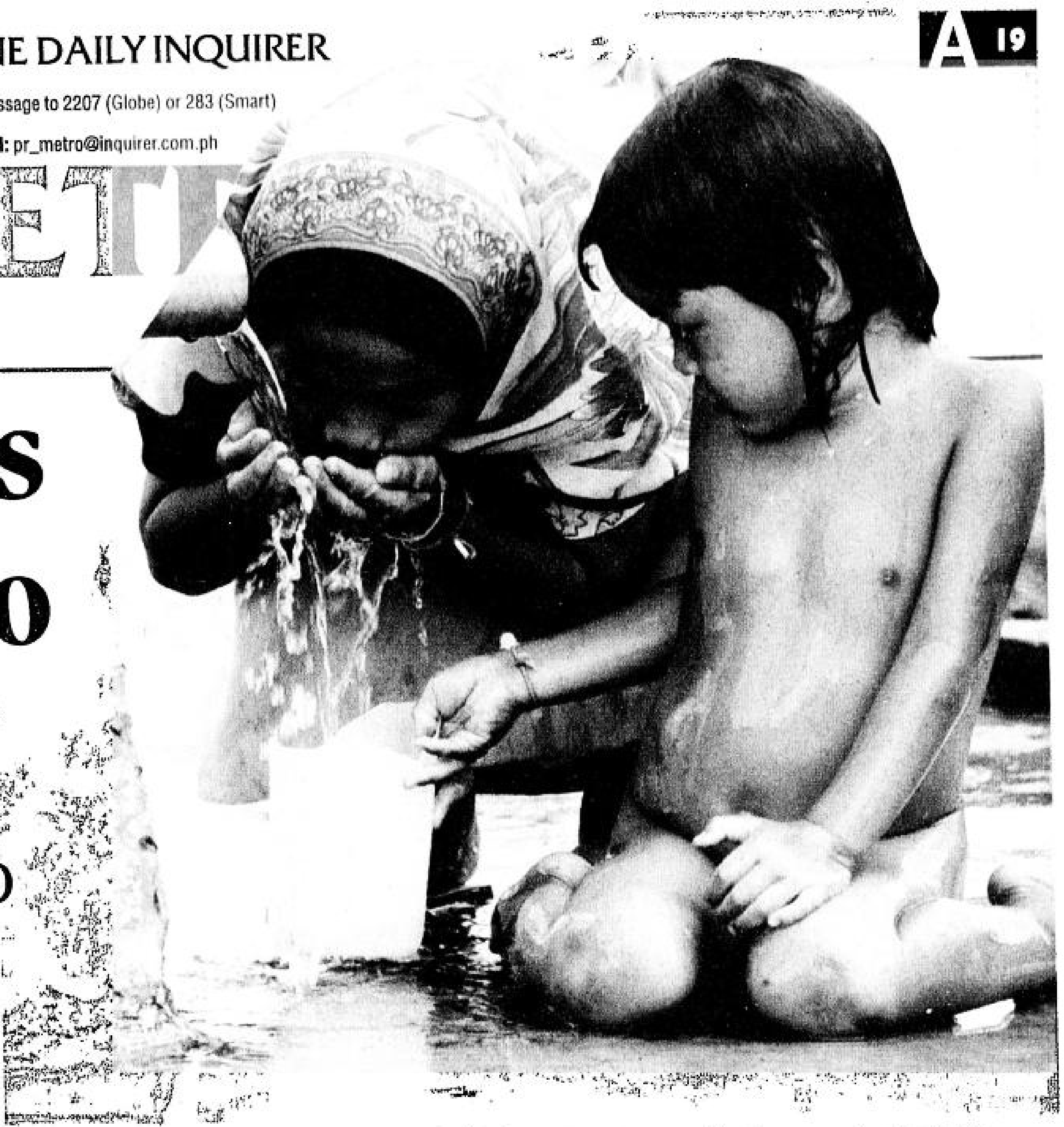
Editor **Ester G. Dipasupil**



THREE cities in the metropolis—Las Piñas, Muntinlupa and Parañaque—will not have enough water for the needs of residents and establishments if the government's water board shuts down deep wells in these areas. The National Water Resources Board, however, has warned of adverse environmental consequences if the wells continue to operate. REUTERS PHOTO

Use of deep wells to stay in 3 Metro Manila cities

Water board says there is no alternative water source

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD cannot stop residents and establishments in three Metro Manila cities from using deep wells because of the lack of an alternative water source in these areas.

NWRB Executive Director Ramon Alikpala identified the three cities as Las Piñas, Parañaque and Muntinlupa.

He said that the Maynilad Water Services Inc. does not have enough resources to provide adequate water supply to these areas, which is why residents and establishments have to resort to using deep wells.

"Maynilad doesn't have enough water, so we're forced to allow people to use the critical source, the deep wells, in those areas," Alikpala said at the Bulong Pulungan forum.

"In other areas, I am campaigning to shut down deep wells. But in those areas, I can't afford to shut them down because there's no alternative," he added.

Alikpala said he had already informed Maynilad of the need to increase the water supply in the three cities.

According to the official, prohibiting the use of deep wells in Las Piñas, Parañaque and Muntinlupa could lead to a lack of water in subdivisions and establishments.

The water board has been trying to reduce the use of deep wells as these might contaminate the ground water supply, lead to land subsidence and the intrusion of salt water into the water supply.

He added that in most Metro Manila cities and nearby provinces, the aquifer level is lower than the sea level, which is a "critical" situation. (An aquifer is an underground layer of water-bearing rock or unconsolidated materials—gravel, sand, silt, or clay—from which groundwater can be extracted using a water well).

Alikpala said it was important to protect the aquifers because these are the only alternative water source, if the dams dry up.

"If we don't protect the aquifers, we are shooting ourselves in the foot," he said.

Alikpala said the NWRB's campaign to stop the use of illegal deep wells has targeted big hotels and shopping malls.

In earlier reports, the NWRB identified the Landmark mall, the Greenhills Shopping Center, SM Fairview and the Meralco office as some establishments which were using illegal deep wells.

Alikpala said establishments usually decide to extract their own water because it was cheaper than getting it from the concessionaire. But he added that the environmental costs from using deep wells were costlier.

Safety check on dormitories, boardinghouses in U-Belt begins

By Tina G. Santos and Erika Sauler, *trainee*

AS PART OF ITS PREPARATION FOR THE opening of classes, the local government of Manila has started its routine inspection of dormitories and boarding houses in the city.

"This is to protect our students, especially those living in the university belt area," said Councilor Ernesto Dionisio, City Council majority floor leader.

Many sub-standard dormitories, some of them virtual fire traps, have sprouted in the area for students with meager resources.

Dionisio said they have already tasked officials of the city fire bureau, as well as building and bureau of permits officials to check if dormitory or boardinghouse owners had complied with fire safety standards, adding that most of them are old, crowded and poorly ventilated structures. General safety requirements include fire protection equipment, including fire extinguishers, sprinklers and hoses, fire alarm systems, emergency lights, fire exits and fire exit signages.

A team led by the City Administrator's Office will check the electrical wirings and facilities, such as water, fire exits, toilets and common areas, Dionisio said. Last January eight people were killed in a fire that gutted a two-story boarding house in Sampaloc, Manila.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **P1.3B earmarked for 9 Metro roads' facelift** /A20
- **Motorcycle-riding bandits rob Manila gas station** /A20
- **Ex-cop nabbed for bribing colleagues to go slow on illegal races betting** /A20

Taguig honors 2 honest employees

By Rica G. Obsequio, *trainee*

TWO EMPLOYEES OF THE TAGUIG CITY Hall were commended by Mayor Freddie Tinga after they returned P40,000 in cash to a businessman who dropped the money while walking on the fourth level of the Market! Market! mall last week.

Valuable find

Edgardo Sta. Ana and Efren Aquino of the city's Area 4 Satellite Government Center were in the mall on May 3 when they found the wad of bills on the floor.

The two said they immediately went to the administration office to report their find.

As Sta. Ana and Aquino were talking to officials of the department store, Efren Panganiban, a businessman, walked in with another man, to report that he had lost his money.

Trust

Tinga commended the two local government employees for their honesty, saying that what they did will help "us realize our goal of getting the public to trust people in the government."

The two honest employees will be honored during a ceremony in city hall this week.

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P1.3B for roads rehab project

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HAS earmarked P1.3 billion for the construction and rehabilitation of nine major thoroughfares in Metro Manila.

The allocation was included in this year's proposed P1-trillion national budget which has yet to be passed by the Senate.

House Deputy Majority Leader Eduardo Gullas said the money would be spent for the "construction, rehabilitation, widening and/or improvement" of major roads in the National Capital Region.

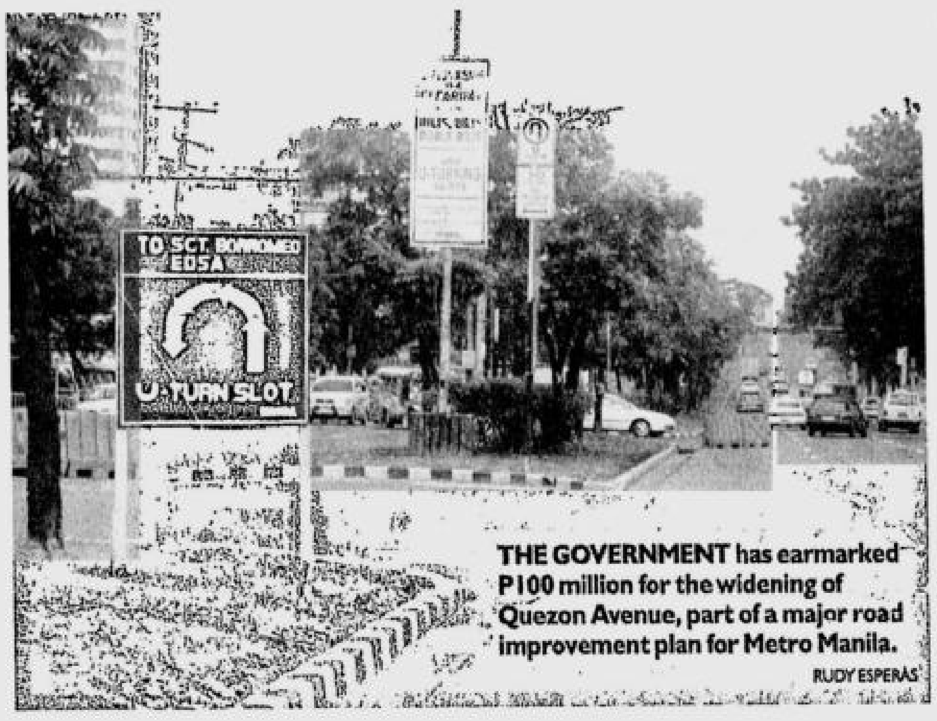
"This will decongest vehicular traffic in Metro Manila in a big way," said Gullas, adding that the poor condition of roads in the metropolis was to blame for the daily monstrous traffic jams and road accidents.

The P1.3 billion would be spent on the following: P400 million for the construction of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Expressway and roads leading to it; P342 million for the widening and concreting of R-10, from C-2 to Zaragosa Street in Manila, including right-of-way; P220 million for the widening and concreting of Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City;

P100 million for the widening of Quezon Avenue in Quezon City; P100 million for the construction of the C-5 Extension, from the South Luzon Expressway to Sucat in Parañaque City;

P95 million for right-of-way in Mindanao Avenue, Quezon City; P30 million for the opening and concreting of the Taguig City Diversion Road; P30 million for the concreting of Congressional Avenue Extension, Quezon City; and P22 million for right-of-way for the C-5/Boni Serrano Avenue Interchange, also in Quezon City.

Gullas said that the P1.3 billion was part of the P126.7-billion public infrastructure spending program contained in the 2006 national budget that the House had passed last month.



THE GOVERNMENT has earmarked P100 million for the widening of Quezon Avenue, part of a major road improvement plan for Metro Manila.

RUDY ESPERAS

Ex-cop nabbed for taking bribes to protect illegal betting

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A FORMER MANILA POLICEMAN was arrested by National Bureau of Investigation agents last Saturday for distributing bribe money weekly to different police stations in Metro Manila to protect illegal horse race betting activities.

Onofre Reyes, who retired from the Manila Police District in 1998, now faces charges for violation of Republic Act 9287, or an act increasing the penalties for those found to be involved in illegal number games.

NBI Special Task Force (STF) chief Reynaldo Esmeralda said his division conducted surveillance operations last Saturday after receiving information about Reyes' illegal activities.

Esmeralda added that around 3 p.m., the agents saw the suspect on P. Guevarra Street in Sta. Cruz, giving a brown envelope to an unidentified man whom the police said was a bribe collector.

The agents then arrested Reyes while the other man was able to escape.

Seized from Reyes were six brown envelopes containing P1,000 to P1,500 each and a list of at least 49 police stations and the names of police officers in Manila, Taguig, Caloocan, Quezon City and Navotas to whom the alleged bribes were to be given, Esmeralda said.

The NBI official added that Reyes had stapled P200 on the envelopes for the collectors and runners.

Reyes, who is now detained at the NBI, was subjected to inquest proceedings in the Manila City Prosecutor's Office last Sunday.

The NBI had arrested and charged 71 suspects, including gambling employees, bookies and bettors, last month for their alleged involvement in unauthorized betting on horse races.

SLEx toll rates to go up on May 15; Skyway spared

By Daxim L. Lucas

TRAVEL FROM MANILA TO THE southern part of Luzon will cost more starting next week once the Philippine National Contruction Corp. raises its toll rates for the South Luzon Expressway.

In a telephone interview, PNCC corporate communications head Charito Chavez said that the toll hike will take effect on May 15 after the company earlier decided to adjust its rates according to the cap approved by regulators.

However, the increase will only be implemented from the Alabang to Calamba, Laguna stretch of the SLEx.

The elevated Skyway from Makati to Bicutan and the stretch of the South Superhighway from Makati to Alabang will be spared from the hike, Chavez said.

Starting Monday, light vehicles or so-called "Class 1" vehicles using the Alabang-Calamba stretch will have to pay P27, representing a P6 increase from the present rate of P21.

Mid-sized vehicles or those classified as "Class 2" must pay P53, or an increase of P12 from the present rate of P41.

Heavy vehicles or those classified as "Class 3" modes of transportation must pay P80, representing a hike of P18 from the present rate of P62.

Corresponding adjustments will also be made for shorter trips along the stretch of the SLEx.

On a per kilometer basis, rates will increase by 29 percent or 93 centavos, compared to the present rate of 72 centavos per kilometer for Class 1 vehicles.

Class 2 vehicles will pay P1.86 per kilometer from P1.44 per kilometer, while Class 3 vehicles will pay P2.80 per kilometer from the existing 2.17 per kilometer.

Chavez said no approval is needed from the Toll Regulatory Board since the company is allowed to adjust its fees under Presidential Decree 1894.

METROBRIEFS

Gas station robbed

MAG-
NA
NAKAW!

FIVE men riding on motorcycles robbed a gasoline station in Sta. Ana, Manila of its earnings on Monday afternoon. Supt. Eduardo Tan Sierra Jr. said the unidentified robbers, all clad in shorts, posed as customers of the Petron gas station on Tejeron Street. Two of them later took out guns and robbed pump attendant Jocelyn Viray of her Nokia 3210 cell phone. They also took P2,000 in cash from cashier Elvira Lanza. Another robber went to cashier's booth and forced Shirley Mata to hand over the gas station's earnings of P40,000. The five men then fled toward Pandacan on board their motorcycles, Sierra said.

Maielle Montayre, trainee

Moment of truth

FOR almost a year he had heard the testimonies against him and presented his own witnesses to clear his name. Next month, actor and former Quezon City Rep. Dennis Roldan will know whether or not he will be allowed to post bail for the kidnapping charges filed against him. Pasig City Regional Trial Court Branch 261 Judge Agnes Reyes-Carpio yesterday ordered the defense and the prosecution to submit their exhibits and memorandum to justify and block Roldan's application for bail. She is expected to resolve the application in a month. Roldan, who has been accused of masterminding the kidnapping of a three-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy in February 2005, applied for bail as soon as the case against him was filed in March 2005. Kidnapping is a non bailable offense, but Roldan claimed the evidence against him was weak.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

P100,000 reward

PHILIPPINE National Police chief Arturo Lomibao has offered a P100,000 reward to anyone who can provide information that would lead to the arrest of the man who killed a businessman in Navotas two weeks ago. Edgardo Dizon, who sold engine and spare parts for ships, was shot dead by a lone suspect near his shop in Daanghari Street. His daughter, Sherry Anne, said Lomibao made the offer when he went to her father's wake last week. "Until now, we still don't know who could have done it," she told the INQUIRER.

Nancy C. Carvajal

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REQUIREMENTS

Orgs, clubs, societies or councils should submit five (5) copies of the following:

- An accomplished Entry Form
- A one-page certification attesting to the existence and veracity of the information submitted
  - for In-School Youth Organizations, a certification from the Office of Student Affairs
  - for Community-based, Out-of-School or Working Youth Organizations, a certification from the LGU/barangay or gov't agency
- A one-page short profile of the organization featuring a brief description, its nature and background, programs and track record
- A three-page profile of the Project Entry, featuring a brief but descriptive account or narrative that will illustrate the program/project.
- 3-page project documentation (photos, testimonies of partners or beneficiaries, certificates, etc.)

- Organizations shall be judged on the basis of a recent program or project that made an impact on the community and which best reflects the efforts of young people as partners in nation-building.
- A continuing project entry (or one that started in 2005) must either be completed, or a major portion must have been undertaken by the deadline.
- Registration in the NYC's Youth Organization Registration Program (YORP) is mandatory; registration papers may be submitted together with the project entry.
- Recipients of other awards are eligible.
- Previous TAYO winners and finalists may still participate, provided they submit a project entry different from the one submitted in the preceding search.
- All decisions of the TAYO Screening Committee and Panel of Judges are final.
- All materials submitted to the TAYO Secretariat automatically become property of the organizers.

SEARCH CRITERIA

- IMPACT of the Project Entry to the community (improvement in literacy, sanitation, health, income, etc.)
- SOCIAL MOBILIZATION (involvement of the community, especially the youth in planning, implementing and evaluating the program or project)
- INNOVATIVENESS (introduction/application of new technologies, uniqueness of services or products, promotion of unique or indigenous ways or materials)
- SUSTAINABILITY AND PROBABILITY OF DUPLICATION

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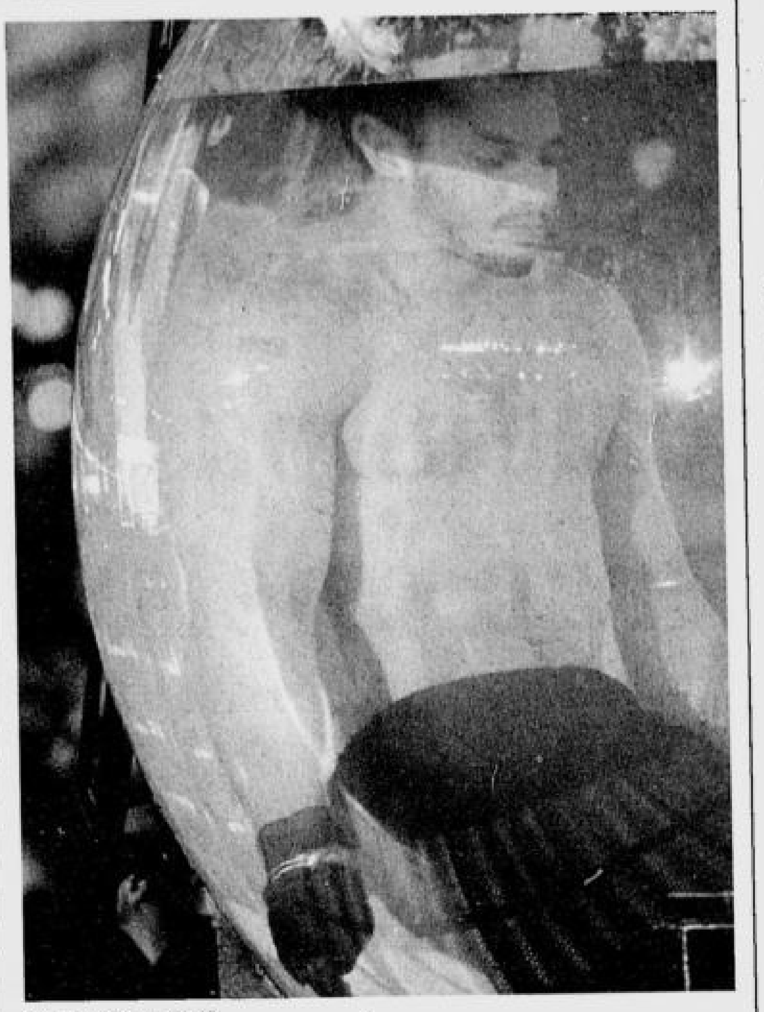


NO HOUDINI
Wearing handcuffs and chains, David Blaine fails to break the world record for being submerged in water for 9 minutes. He lasted only 7 minutes, 8 seconds. AP

Palestinian Authority in danger of collapse, says World Bank

JERUSALEM—THE DONOR-STARVED Palestinian Authority may cease to function if government employees continue to go without salaries for much longer, the World Bank warned on Monday.

Civil servants will simply down tools and discipline in the ranks of the security services could well collapse if pay cheques, which have not arrived for the last two months, are not forthcoming, the Washington-based body said.

The European Union and United States have both frozen aid payments to the Palestinian Authority since the radical Islamist movement Hamas took power over its refusal to renounce the use of violence or accept Israel's right to exist.

Israel has also stopped handing over customs duties it used to collect on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, worth around 60 million dollars a month.

Although Muslim countries have pledged tens of millions in a bid to plug the gap, the funds have yet to be transferred with banks wary of falling foul of international laws that prohibit the financing of terrorist organizations. Hamas appears on US and EU terror blacklists.

A previous report by the World Bank last month had warned that the Palestinian economy would experience a dramatic decline with incomes decreasing by 30 percent and unemployment doubling by the end of the year.

But even those dire projections "now appear too rosy," the new survey said.

"If the PA (Palestinian Authority) remains unpaid/minimally paid for several months, it may cease to function," the report said.

Institutional breakdown could undermine years of good work in a matter of weeks and prove extremely hard to rectify.

"Complex structures such as school systems are not machines to be switched on and off at will," the report said.

"A protracted period in which the PA is disabled might result in the unraveling of a dozen years of donor efforts to build the responsible, accountable institutions needed for a future Palestinian state or for continued governance." The World Bank said there was already evidence the security forces were prepared to take the law into their own hands in order to force the authorities to hand over cash.

"Non-payment, part-payment or unequal payment of salaries could precipitate breakdowns in force discipline in the security services," said the report.

"A deteriorating security environment could make it difficult for government, commerce and relief efforts alike to operate properly." The report reiterated warnings from the UN and aid organizations that a humanitarian crisis loomed in the Palestinian territories.

It said food and gasoline shortages are already emerging in Gaza as a result of prolonged Israeli enforced border closings.

With more than 160,000 on the government payroll, one in three Palestinians are dependent on state salaries.

"We agree with the World Bank," said Palestinian planning minister Samir Abu Eisheh told AFP. "If we don't get money soon we face a real disaster." Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas also called for the resumption of aid to the government in a letter Monday to the Middle East quartet which comprises Russia, the United Nations, United States and European Union.

"The payment of aid and financial support for the Palestinian Authority should resume in order to avoid a real humanitarian crisis," the moderate Abbas was quoted as saying in letter.

Israel has called claims of a humanitarian disaster exaggerated but the World Bank said Israel risked becoming the target of Palestinian anger as the plight of citizens in the West Bank and Gaza became ever harder.

"The dominant popular response to intense economic pressure in 2001-2 was anger at Israel as the perceived agent of economic distress not rejection of the violence that Israel was acting to prevent," it said. *AFP*

Blair hints at mid-2007 exit

BLAIR REUTERS

LONDON—BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair has broadly hinted at his intention to stand down within the coming year, as his troubled Labour government sinks to fresh lows in the opinion polls.

Speaking after one of the most bruising few weeks of his nine years in power, Blair, who turned 53 on the weekend, rejected a growing cacophony of calls for him to name the day that he intends to resign.

To do so, he told a press conference Monday, would "paralyze the proper workings of government... and therefore damage the country." "The public are the boss. If we are not careful and don't get on with the business of governing, we will lose them," he said.

But in a significant turn, Blair signaled that he was retreating from his previously declared intention of completing "a full third term"—in other words, staying in Downing Street until the next election due by May 2010.

He said his plan now is to ensure "a stable and orderly transition" to a new prime minister—almost certainly Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown—"with the time plainly needed for my successor to establish himself." Later Monday, in a closed door meeting with Labour members of parliament, Blair reportedly declared that he would give his successor "ample" time to settle in.

His language led political commentators to conclude that Blair now is preparing to step aside sometime in the middle of 2007, so long as rebels within Labour do not succeed in pushing him out before then.

Blair steered Labour to an unprecedented third straight general election victory a year ago, but since then his government has been dragged down by a string of highly embarrassing furors.

Fresh evidence that the public mood is turning hostile came in an opinion poll Tuesday in the Times newspaper that put support for Labour at just 30 percent—its lowest point since 1992, when the party was in opposition.

The main opposition Conservatives enjoyed an eight-point lead, while the smaller Liberal Democrats had 20 percent, according to the poll conducted by Populus after a wholesale cabinet reshuffle Friday. *AFP*

Study: Most newborn deaths happen in first 24 hours in developing world

VIETNAMESE nurses care for newborn babies treated at the Vien Nhi pediatrics hospital in Hanoi April 28. AP

HANOI—A BABY BORN IN THE DEVELOPing world must fight to survive right from the start, with up to 2 million deaths occurring in the first 24 hours of life every year, according to a global report on mother and infant mortality.

Many of those deaths could easily be prevented with cheap interventions, such as knit caps to keep newborns warm or clean blades to cut umbilical cords, according to the analysis released Tuesday by the US-based group, Save the Children.

Expectant mothers also do not fare well in poor countries, with half a million women dying annually from complications during pregnancy or birth often because they have no care before, during or after their babies are born, the report said. A huge number of women give birth at home alone or with no skilled attendant.

"In most of the developing world, childbirth is a dance with death for both mother and baby, even though 70 percent of those deaths could be prevented," said co-author Anne Tinker, director of the organization's Saving Newborn Lives Initiative. "The secret is really knowledge."

The 50-page report released ahead of Mother's Day compiles data from the world's nations as well as the World Health Organization and Unicef. It presents a bleak look at the challenges pregnant women and newborns face in impoverished countries, where up to 99 percent of deaths occur—illustrating the wide gap between rich and poor nations.

For instance, 1 in every 5 women in sub-Saharan Africa has lost a newborn, along with 1 in every 7 women in South Asia. Some 4 million babies die in their first month of life each year—the total number born annually in the United States.

Out of 78 low- and middle-income countries examined, Liberia had the highest newborn mortality rate with 65 out of 1,000 babies dying in a country where forced teen marriages are common and one out of 16 women dies during pregnancy or childbirth.

Liberia was closely followed by Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Pakistan and Ivory Coast—countries known for conflict and widespread violence against women.

In the Afghan village of Rabat north of Kabul, a woman explained that her seventh child, a daughter, died just 14 days after birth two months ago.

"I am not sure why she died, but she was not able to breast-feed and I was not receiving prenatal medical care," said Nagis, who uses just one name. Like all of her children, the baby was delivered at home because there was no female doctor or midwife to aid her at the clinic.

"It is generally considered as taboo in the community for men to treat women, especially during pregnancy," she said. *AP*

Two dim dwarf galaxies found around Milky Way

WASHINGTON—TWO DIM dwarf galaxies are the Milky Way's newest-known galactic companions, astronomers studying a vast swath of the sky reported on Monday.

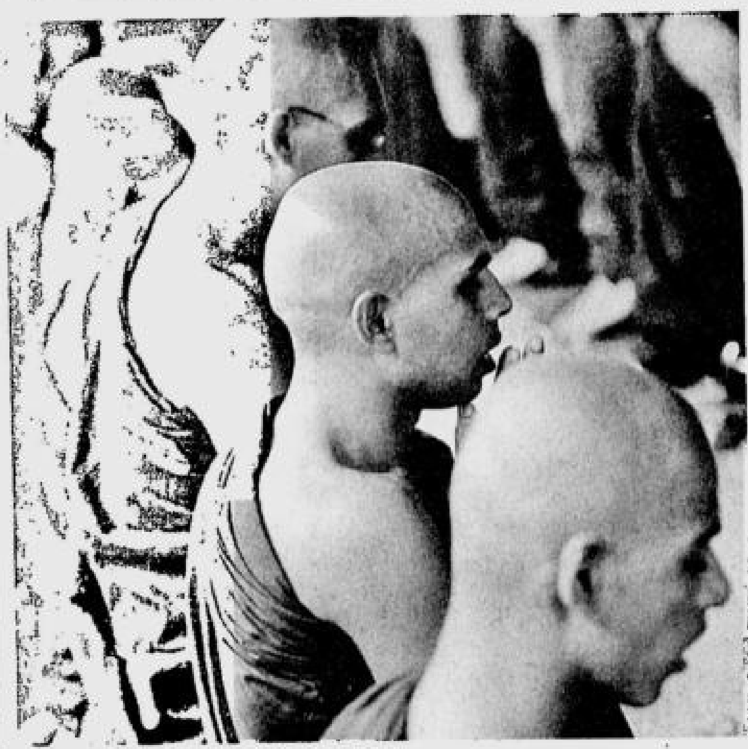
This brings the total number of dwarf galaxies in the Milky Way's cosmic neighborhood to 14. But theorists believe there could conceivably be hundreds more.

The two newly detected dwarfs were found in the direction of the constellations Canes Venatici (the hunting dogs) and Bootes (the herdsman), scientists studying the Sloan Digital Sky Survey said in a statement. The little galaxy found in Canes Venatici is about 640,000 light-years from the Sun, a stone's throw in cosmic terms. A light-year is about 10 trillion km, the distance light travels in a year. The dwarf found in Bootes is about the same distance from the Sun.

Even though they are close, these galaxies were hard to spot because they were so dim, a defining characteristic of dwarf galaxies. The new galaxy in Bootes is the faintest discovered, with a total luminosity of 100,000 Suns.

Some astronomers theorize that there should be hundreds of clumps of so-called cold dark matter—slow-moving subatomic particles left over from the earliest period of the universe—orbiting the Milky Way, which contains Earth.

Each of these clumps should be massive enough to host a dwarf galaxy, but so far only 14 have been found. *Reuters*



THE ENLIGHTENED ONES
Newly ordained Buddhist monks pray at a ceremony marking their entry into priesthood at the village of Polgahawela in the north-western part of the island, May 8. AFP

South Africa's ex-deputy president cleared of rape

ZUMA AFP

JOHANNESBURG—SOUTH AFRICA'S FORMER deputy president Jacob Zuma was acquitted of rape on Monday in a verdict that capped the country's most sensational trial since the end of apartheid.

"The accused is found not guilty," said Judge Willem van der Merwe as thousands of supporters broke out in loud cheers and ululation outside the Johannesburg high court.

Once the frontrunner to succeed President Thabo Mbeki, Zuma had maintained that he had consensual sex with a 31-year-old woman HIV-positive woman, the daughter of a family friend, at his Johannesburg home in November.

"In my judgment, the state has not proved the accused's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt," said the judge.

Zuma rose from his seat after hearing the "not guilty" verdict and basked in the applause from his supporters in the courtroom before turning to hug his lawyer Kemp J Kemp.

The "not guilty" verdict pulls Zuma from the brink of political oblivion, but it remains unclear whether the veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle will be able to kick-start his presidential campaign.

His troubles do not end with the acquittal. He is due to go on trial again in July for corruption in a case that led to his dismissal as deputy president last year.

After the verdict, 64-year-old Zuma emerged victorious at a downtown Johannesburg square to address his supporters in his native Zulu language and lead them in his signature liberation-era song "Mshiniwami," or "Bring Me My Machinegun." "I love you as people, as you love me. I would like to thank you for showing your support with me today," said Zuma, accompanied by his daughter Duduzile who testified on his behalf during the trial. *AFP*

Beatles lose court battle over Apple trademark

LONDON—THE BEATLES' MULTIMEDIA corporation lost its British High Court battle with Apple Computer on Monday, leaving the US group free to continue using the apple name and logo on its revolutionary iTunes music store website.

The Beatles' Apple Corps lost its claim for financial damages and court orders to stop Apple Computer using the "apple" marks in connection with the website that allows iPod users to download and save thousands of songs.

Apple Corps—owned by former Beatles Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and the widows of bandmates John Lennon and George Harrison—had accused the US company of breaching an agreement between the firms by promoting music products on the Internet. Apple Computer is the market leader for music downloads, with around three million songs being downloaded each day from its iTunes service.

The verdict could cost Apple Corps more than three million pounds ($5.6 million) once all legal bills have been finalised.

On Monday, it agreed to pay Apple Computer's costs, so far estimated at about two million pounds. Judge Edward Mann, a self-confessed iPod owner, granted The Beatles' firm permission to appeal against his ruling. Following the verdict, Apple Computer's chief executive Steve Jobs invited 1960s stars The Beatles to join the iPod generation as their songs are not available on iTunes.

"We have always loved The Beatles, and hopefully we can now work together to get them on the iTunes Music Store," he said. Regarding the ruling, Apple Corps manager Neil Aspinall said: "With great respect to the trial judge, we consider he has reached the wrong conclusion.

"We felt that during the course of the trial we clearly demonstrated just how extensively Apple Computer had broken the agreement. We will accordingly be filing an appeal," he added. The long-running spat dates back to the 1980s and the two companies reached a peace deal in 1991, under which Computer paid Corps $26 million, which forbade each side entering the other's exclusive "field of use" of the Apple name. *AFP*

Most Iranian exiles oppose military strike

LOS ANGELES—WITH NEON SIGNS in Persian decorating the window of the Woodland Hills Market—"Kabob" glowing in bright red, "Iranian Market" in pea green—this corner grocery store could just as well be in Tehran as in the heart of "Tehrangeles," the name Iranians everywhere have given their largest exile community.

Products labeled in Persian and English reflect the dual identity of most customers, who find themselves particularly torn these days, wanting change in Iran but dreading what further sanctions or military action would do to Iranians.

"I love my country but I hate these mullahs," said Houshang Samandi, a television director for an Iranian satellite channel whose life in Los Angeles remains so completely Iranian that after 14 years he still asks a fellow exile to translate the word "sanctions."

"Sanctions will only harm the ordinary people," Samandi said. "If there is a military attack, they will be killing my people. But if they don't attack, the mullahs will never leave." *NYT News Service*

Major powers fail to break impasse over Iran crisis

NEW YORK—MAJOR POWERS ENDED INTENSIVE TALKS LATE Monday with no agreement on a UN resolution to rein in Iran's controversial nuclear program and were unlikely to have a text ready this week, officials said.

They said discussions between US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her counterparts from Russia, China, Britain, France, Germany and the European Union failed to resolve differences over how to deal with Tehran.

Britain's new foreign secretary Margaret Beckett, making her debut on the international scene, called the session at the Waldorf Hotel here an "important and difficult meeting." "Everyone believed Iran must give up its nuclear enrichment program," Beckett told reporters after the talks and a dinner. "Its the way to achieve that we have to agree (on)."

Participants said the ministers, who met for two hours without aides before going into dinner, agreed on the need to keep Iran from using its civilian nuclear program to develop atomic bombs. But a senior US official reported no progress in melting Russian and Chinese resistance to American calls for tough action under chapter seven of the UN charter, which would authorize sanctions or the use of force.

"There is not yet agreement on the tactics and what's most pronounced is that there is no agreement yet that this should be a chapter seven resolution," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Based on tonight's meeting, I would not expect a resolution to be voted on and adopted this week," the official said. "I think it's going to take a little bit more time." He said political directors of the UN Security Council's five permanent members and Germany would take up the thorny issue Tuesday and most likely hold another round of talks next week in Europe.

Russian news agencies quoted Moscow's top envoy, Sergei Lavrov, as calling for further negotiations, including more direct talks between major powers and Iran.

"There was general agreement on the need to create conditions for resuming direct negotiations on Iran's nuclear program," Interfax news agency quoted Lavrov as telling Russian reporters in New York.

France's chief diplomat Philippe Douste-Blazy said the ministers discussed "incentives and dissuasive measures according to the Iranian response" in the confrontation.

Among the incentives raised by the French minister were cooperation in civilian nuclear energy, increased commercial and technological ties and security guarantees that the United States has refused to provide.

Rice had earlier Monday billed the talks as "a time for the international community to come together and say with very great clarity it's time for Iran to accede to the demands of the international community." But her spokesperson Sean McCormack insisted the third ministerial meeting this year of the so-called P5 plus one was not designed to produce specific results.

"It was not intended as a discussion about the language on a resolution," McCormack said. "This was intended more as a strategic-level discussion about how to deal with various issues presented by Iran." He provided no details of the discussions among Rice, Lavrov, Beckett, Douste-Blazy, China's Li Zhaoxing, Germany's Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the European Union's Javier Solana. *AFP*

Moussaoui wants new trial, withdraws his guilty plea

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA—AL-QAIDA PLOTter Zacarias Moussaoui made a desperate bid Monday to get a new trial over the Sept. 11 attacks conspiracy but a judge rejected his attempt to withdraw his guilty plea.

Moussaoui made a quick-fire decision to change his plea one day after he was sentenced to life imprisonment without a possibility of release last Thursday.

The 37-year-old Frenchman said in an affidavit that he had lied to the court when he admitted involvement in planning the attacks.

But Judge Leonie Brinkema said federal law prevented a guilty plea being changed once a sentence has been imposed. "His motion is too late and must be denied on this basis alone," Brinkema said.

Moussaoui said in his affidavit that his testimony admitting a role in the Sept. 11 plot had been a "complete fabrication." He said he knew nothing of the plans for the attacks on New York and Washington which left almost 3,000 dead—but that he had lied to his trial because of his distrust of the American judicial system.

Moussaoui entered a guilty plea, in April 2005, to six charges of conspiring to carry out the attacks.

His lawyers said they were aware the law did not allow Moussaoui to change his plea, but said they filed the motion because of their "problematic relationship with Moussaoui, of which the court is well aware."

Moussaoui refused to cooperate with his lawyers throughout the two month trial and often cursed them.

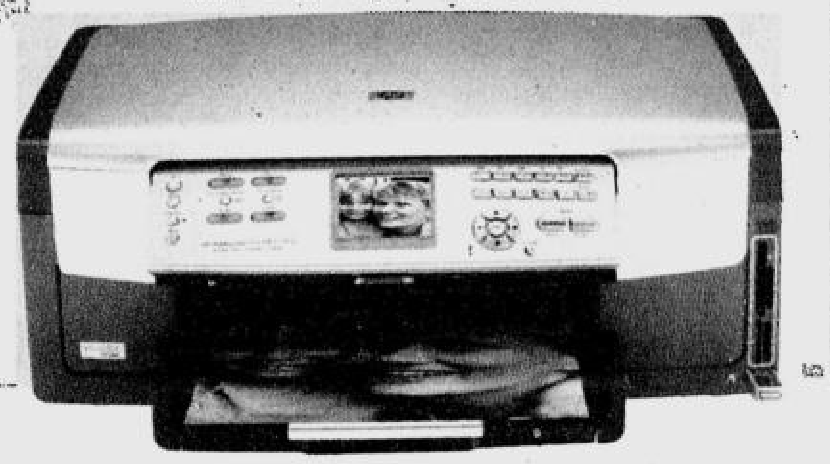
Last Wednesday, the jury rejected execution but decided Moussaoui should be imprisoned for life with no chance of parole.

In formally pronouncing the sentence on Thursday, Brinkema warned Moussaoui that he could not appeal the conviction.

He does have the right to appeal the sentence, though Brinkema said at the time "I believe it would be an act of futility". Brinkema said Monday that Moussaoui could also appeal her latest decision against him.

Moussaoui's lawyers said he changed his mind about his plea while waiting to be transferred to a super-maximum security prison in Colorado.

"I was extremely surprised when the jury did not return a verdict of death because I knew that it was the intention of the American justice system to put me to death," Moussaoui said in his new statement. *AFP*



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Promo runs from April 24 to June 30, 2006.
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DEBBY Catabay of Region 1 executes her winning leap in the triple jump. NIÑO JESUS OBERTA, PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

NCR swimmers hit gold

By Marc Anthony Reyes

NAGA CITY (VIA BAYANTEL)—NATIONAL CAPITAL REgion launched its torpedoes on the pool yesterday, bringing down three gold medals highlighted by the record-breaking performance of Dorothy Grace Hong in Day 3 of the Palarong Pambansa at the Metro Naga Sports Complex.

Hong, 12, poised herself to duplicate if not surpass her double-gold feat in Iloilo last year, when she ruled the girls elementary 100-meter backstroke. She posted a time of one minute, 10.80 seconds to take the gold. She earlier reset the Palaro record in the heat with a 1:09.65 clocking.

Using her advanced underwater strokes to gain headway, the incoming freshman at the La Salle-Araneta in Malabon, who won the 100m and the 4x100 relay last year, erased the 1998 benchmark of Luica Dacanay (1:14.33) set in Bacolod City by almost five seconds.

Drawing inspiration from her performance were Maxim Christopher Quilala, who dominated the secondary boys 100m back, and Gian Daniel Berino, who captured the gold in the elementary boys 200m freestyle for NCR.

Palarong Pambansa veteran Aiza Rocero, goaded by her fellow Bicolanas, produced the first golden triumph for the host region with a victory in the secondary girls javelin.

Rocero expressed surprise over her 36.95-meter feat which she claimed far surpassed her personal best of 32 meters. But she said she's happy to give Bicol its first gold in the meet being dominated by the National Capital Region.

NCR, the defending champion in secondary competitions, had a total of 10 golds in both divisions to lead the competitions, while Calabarzon and Mimaropa already have two apiece.

The Big City gymnasts continued to flash their grace at the University of Nueva Caceres gym with victories in elementary girls artistic team event. Their individual all-round bets also took three gold medals led by Amanda Alejandrino, Jiatca Teresa Atis and Anna Doroteo, who finished 1-2-3.

Express tackle Giants sans Ritualo

Games Today ***(Araneta Coliseum)***
4:40 p.m.—Purefoods vs Air21
7:35 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs San Miguel

By Musong R. Castillo

LESS THAN 48 HOURS AFTER LOSing its acclaimed leader, Air21 plunges into action today, not only needing to find a new cornerstone but also to chalk up a win that would prop up the Express' sagging fortunes in the PBA Philippine Cup.

After dealing gunslinger Ren-Ren Ritualo to Talk 'N Text, the Express clash with Purefoods at 4:40 p.m. in a game that could well determine who will step up in place of their former guard who more or less determined what little success they had in the past.

Eighth in the nine-team field at 4-8, Air21 got seldom-used role player Leo Avenido and future draft rights in return, and team manager Lito Alvarez said that the Express would slowly become Nino (KG) Canaleta's team.

"The team owner wants to employ pressure defense all the way," Alvarez had told the INQUIRER on Monday. "And Ritualo is a known scorer. The core of the team will now be Canaleta."

Ritualo will take his more-than-20-point-a-game average to the already formidable Phone Pals and the Express are left with no legitimate outside threat, or a player with the proven ability to light it up against any team in the league.

RITUALO: Now with Talk 'N Text

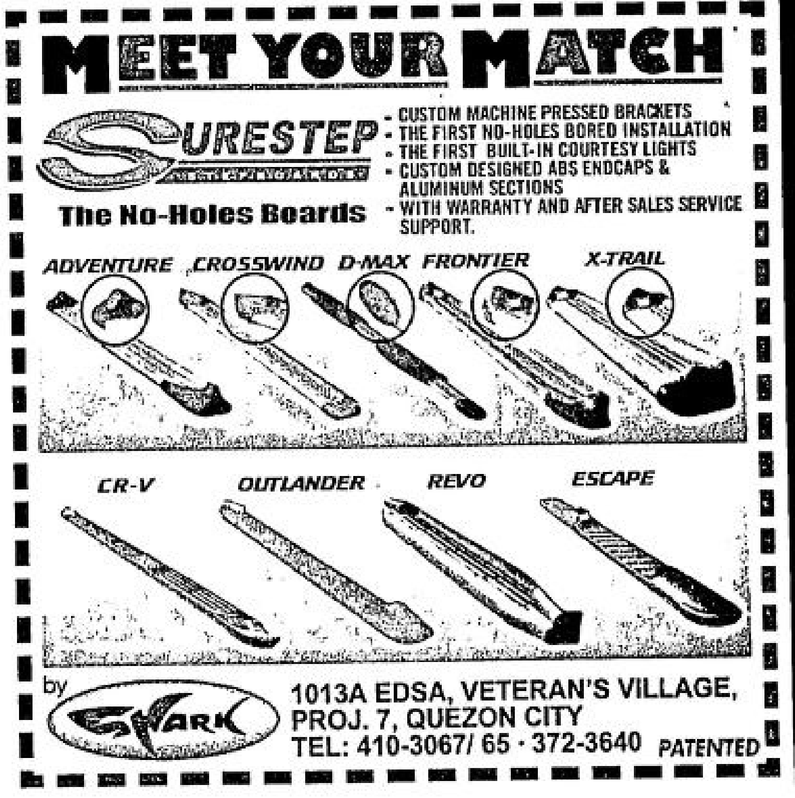
The Chunkee Giants will take to the Araneta Coliseum floor on a high, riding the momentum of a four-game winning streak capped by a victory on Friday that halted sister team San Miguel's year-best seven-game run.

Another victory for the Giants today will move the team closer toward clinching an outright semifinal spot, which coach Ryan Gregorio believes is just two wins away from where the team sits at the moment.

"Eleven wins should be enough to make the semis outright," Gregorio said. "Considering how the teams are bunched (in the bottom half), two more victories could give us an automatic seat in the Final Four."

San Miguel aims to keep in step with the Giants later, colliding with struggling Sta. Lucia in the 7:35 p.m. contest.

The Beermen slipped a bit last week but are still the logical picks over the Realtors, who have been in the doldrums all tournament long with a 3-8 record.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Davao booters prevail

SAN CARLOS CITY—Davao bounced back from a draw with an 11-0 thrashing of Masbate, while Cebu put itself in a strong position to advance into the knockout stage yesterday in the 1st PFF National Girls Under-17 Championships at the SJRI ballfields here.

Striker July Anne Bunac booted in five goals and Cherry Mae Vilchez produced a hat-trick for the Davaoeñas, who were held to a 3-3 stalemate by Bukidnon Monday.

In the other Group A match, Cebu, drawing a goal each from team captain Gabrielle Mercado and Bea Maximo, moved closer to the semifinals with a 2-1 victory over Bukidnon.

Mia Arcenas fed the 16-year-old Mercado of Cebu International School, who was unmarked inside the box, and the skipper made no mistake rolling the ball between the legs of the Bukidnon keeper for the opening goal in the 15th minute.

The win hiked Cebu's output to six points in two matches with a six-goal difference, while Davao remained in second with four points and an 11-goal difference.

The two teams clash at 8 a.m. today for the top spot in Group A.

Cedelf P. Tupas, PDI Visayas Bureau

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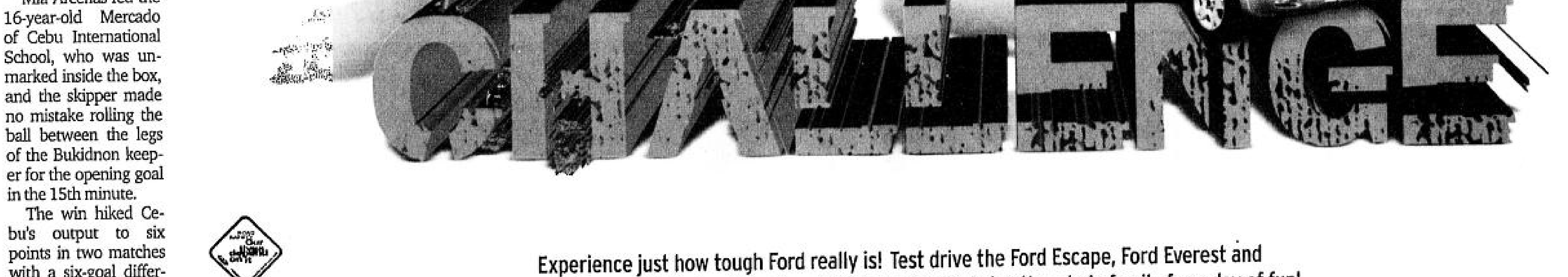
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SPORTSWATCH

Gonzales rules BRC Karting

PAOLO GONZALES RULED THE MINI-ROK CLASS RECENTLY IN THE SECOND leg of the Shell-Cali Superkarting Series at the Batangas Racing Circuit in Rosario, Batangas. All the six entries came in one pack and only inches apart from each other in this event sponsored by Pilipinas Shell Helix, San Miguel Corp., Denso Iridium Power, Honda Phils. Eastway Company, Aeromed Ambulance Transport and official tires Yokohama Kart Tires. Renz Pazcoguin reached the finish line first but was slapped a one-second penalty for an unnecessary bump on Gonzales.

Lapu-lapu City hosts 3-cock special

A CASH POT OF P120,000 IS AT STAKE IN A SPECIAL 3-COCK DERBY sponsored by Thunderbird Platinum on May 16 at the Mahayahay II Sports Complex in Lapu-Lapu City. Entry fee is P3,300. For inquiries, call 09168461927 or 09195871695. Meanwhile, the 2nd Quezon Cockers Association Kitakits 3-Cock Derby will be held on May 19 at the Sariaya Sports Complex backed by Thunderbird Bexan-XP. Close to P200,000 is at stake for an entry fee of P5,500. Submission of weights is from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

80 fights at SJC today

THE OLD-TIME NEVADA 4-COCK DERBY KICKS OFF AT 5 P.M. TODAY AT THE San Juan Coliseum, with over 80 fights scheduled. A guaranteed prize of P400,000 will be given to the winners. Required entry fee is only P10,000 in the event that has Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as sponsor. Another 4-cock event blasts off at SJC on May 15. For inquiries, call 725-5369 and 725-5665.

Bacolor Gold derby May 15

THE MAKATI COLISEUM HOSTS ON MAY 15, THE BACOLOR GOLD 5-COCK derby with no less than P700,000 at stake. The event, hosted by Efren Canlas of Pampanga, is backed by B-Meg Derby Ace. Participants are reminded to submit entries on Sunday, May 14, from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. Meanwhile, the Summer Salpukan 6-cock derby resumes tomorrow, Thursday, May 11. For more details, please contact 896-3545.

SILVER CUP: PCSO chair Sergio Valencia (seated, second from left) signs an agreement with the PCSO, Philracom and MJCI for the 11th PCSO First Gentleman Silver Cup this Sunday at San Lazaro. Also signing were (seated from left) Philracom's Rogelio Tandiama, PCSO's Conrado Zabella, and Henry Kahn of MJCI. Witnesses were (from left) Carlos Castillo, Rey Empremiado, Betsy Paruginog, Henry Beech, Committee chair Jose Malang, Manuel Garcia and Carlo Mendez.

RACING

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Looney Tune (1), Bear cat (6), Twiggy's Charm (7)

Race 2—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Mika's Pride (9), Astimegoesby (5), Bullish Dream (10), Dulce My Love (4), Long Hitter (3)

Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Cash Mc Call (3), Mandalay Bay (4), Heart Of The Wind (5), Naman Naman/Pasipil (1)

Race 4 (Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Smokin' Rod (7), Rebecca's Magic (3), Dow Jones (6), Hello Junior (4), Ilocos Pride (10)

Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Refreshing (7), Iron Mic (4), Stratosphere (2), King Aljhun (3)

Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Sell-made/Even Now (2), Mes Monique (5), Consiglieri (7), Tiramisu (8), Red Diamond (4)

Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Valid Hazm (2), Juanito's Dream (6), Kambro/Alitaplap (8), Step On The Gas (3), Apex (5)

Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Taken Ten (11), Latina (9), Tribeca (4), Sugar Ray (3), Miss Vicky (5), Gonfelon Story (2)

Archers, SB Cubs champs

THE DE LA SALLE ALL-STARS and the San Beda Red Cubs crowned themselves champions in the maiden offering of the Total-Filoil-Flying V Homegrown Cup at the San Juan gym.

Alvin Magpantay had 18 points and Johnedel Cardel added 16 as the Green Archers routed the San Beda Red Lions, 92-66, in the alumni division championship game.

The Red Cubs, meanwhile, subdued the Ateneo Blue Eaglets, 62-55, to bag the high school division crown.

Tony Boy Espinosa of La Salle was voted Most Valuable Player of the tournament sponsored by Shell and Globe.

Joining Espinosa in the Mythical Five were Green Archer Dominic Uy, San Beda's Sonny Manucat and Elmer Reyes, and FEU's Eric Gascon.

In high school class, San Beda's Garvo Lanete was voted MVP and was joined in the Mythical Five by Red Cubs Luis Rivera, Ateneo's Lorenzo Katipunan and Raymond Austria, and La Salle's Ferdinand.

The tournament was supported by Sunbolt, Immuvit, Accel, Inihaw Circle, Bank of Commerce, Banco de Oro, PBCom, Gerry's Grill, X-24, Security Bank and Millennium Plans.

Carter leads charg as Nets cool Heat

Suns continue to rise in Phoenix

MIAMI—VINCE CARTER SCORED 27 POINTS TO help the New Jersey Nets withstand a late Miami charge and beat the Heat 100-88 in their NBA second round series opener on Monday.

Jason Kidd added 22 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for the Nets, with Game Two in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference series scheduled for Wednesday.

In Phoenix, Steve Nash had 31 points and 12 assists after receiving the NBA's MVP Award, leading the Suns to a 130-123 win over the Los Angeles Clippers in the second round playoff series opener.

New Jersey dominated the first half, taking a 64-46 lead, and increased that advantage to 28 points before an 18-3 Miami run in the fourth quarter cut the gap to nine.

The Nets did not allow the Heat to get any closer, however, scoring an impressive road win in the series opener.

"We kept our composure," Kidd told reporters. "Miami is too good a team to think they weren't going to make a run, everybody sucked it up."

The Nets led 89-65 with 9:53 left when the Heat went on its run. But Carter scored the game's next five points to take the momentum away from the hosts, who were unable to recover from a poor start.

"I think it was really important for us to get off to a good start," New Jersey coach Lawrence Frank told reporters.

"We were lucky to build that lead because Miami made that late run. It's just one game and we've just got to keep getting better."

The Nets lost Richard Jefferson with an ankle injury in the third quarter. Ex-rays proved negative but Jefferson left the arena in a walking boot after scoring 20 points in the 22 minutes he played.

Nenad Krstic added 11 points for the Nets, who shot 49 percent from the field to just 39 percent for Miami.

Dwyane Wade led Miami with 25 points, while Shaquille O'Neal had 20 points and 10 rebounds despite getting into foul trouble and sitting on the bench for long stretches of the first half.

"That wasn't the way we obviously wanted to start," Miami coach Pat Riley told reporters. "We were just not ready at the beginning of the game to play at their level. Big time."

"Our goal was to come down here and get one," Kidd said.

"Now that we've done that, we have to look at this as being 0-0, and now let's go get the next one."

The Suns lead the best-of-seven Western Conference series against the Clippers, 1-0, with game two in Phoenix on Wednesday.

Raja Bell had 22 points for the Suns and Shawn Marion added 20 points and 15 rebounds, two of six Phoenix players scoring in double-figures.

Elton Brand led the Clippers with 40 points on 18-for-22 shooting and had nine rebounds. *- Reuters*

NBA on TV:

SOLAR SPORTS—Cleveland vs Detroit (7 a.m. live, replay tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.)

SPORTSPLUS—Dallas vs San Antonio (9:30 a.m. live, 9:30 p.m. replay)

RPN-9—Cleveland vs Detroit (7 p.m.)

WALLACE: Defensive player AP

PAUL: Rookie of the Year AP

Hornets' Paul, Piston

OKLAHOMA CITY—NEW ORLEANS HORNETS point guard Chris Paul, who led all first-year players in points, assists, steals and other categories, will be named the NBA's Rookie of the Year.

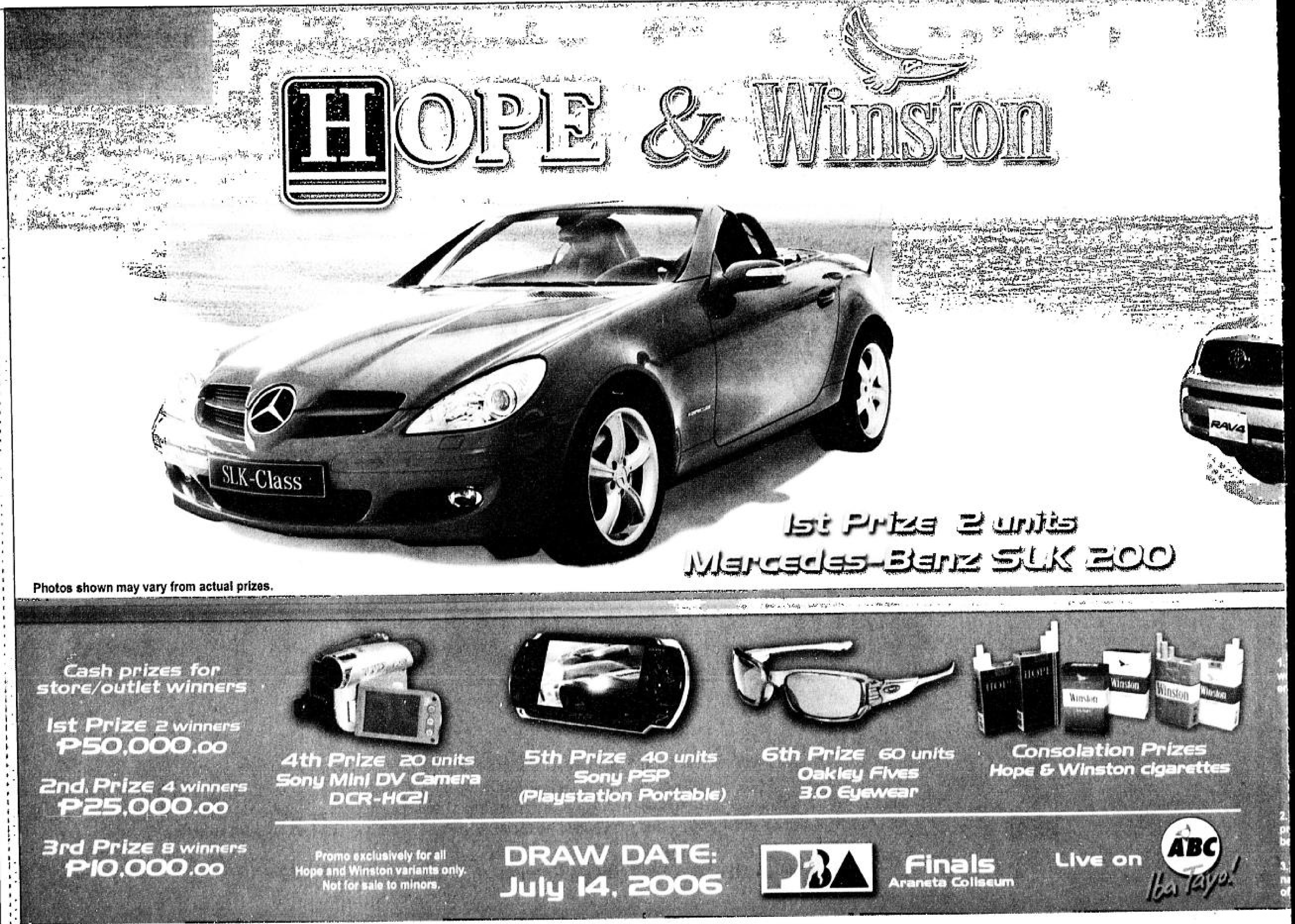
A person within the league told The Associated Press of Paul's award on Monday on condition of anonymity because the official announcement was scheduled for Wednesday.

Paul was drafted as the No. 4 overall pick in the 2005 NBA draft, and he quickly emerged as one of the Hornets' best players. Among rookies, he ranked first in points (16.1), assists (7.8), steals (2.2), double-doubles (21 played (36.4) and triple doubles (2).

"I couldn't have asked for a bette son," Paul said after the Hornets' sea mid-April.

With Paul running the show, the proved from 18 wins last season to son and stayed in the playoff chase u week of the season. He joined Br (1997-98) as the only NBA rookies the league in steals, with 175."

Meanwhile, in Auburn Hills, Michi



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MOURNING
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VINCE Carter (right) shoots against Alonzo Mourning. AP

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Pistons center Ben Wallace won the Defensive Player of the Year award Monday for the fourth time in five years for his ability to guard players ranging from Shaquille O'Neal to LeBron James.

"It's definitely a team award," Wallace said. "I'm only as good as the guys that play in front of me."

Wallace is one of only two players in league history to win the award four times. Wallace won the award last year and in the 2003 and 2002 seasons. Dikembe Mutombo won it in 2001, 1998, 1997 and 1995. *AP*

Mayol doesn't deserve his Japanese manager

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

BOXING PATRIOT REX WAKEE Salud, who tried but luckily failed to bet on Rodel Mayol, said the failed world boxing title-seeker has been released from the Tokyo hospital to where he was rushed late last Saturday.

There are two plans for Mayol: move up to the light flyweight (108 lbs) class or fight again for the minimum weight world title if champion Eagle Kyowa decides to vacate the 105-lbs throne.

The 27-year-old Kyowa, an exported Thai fighter by the name of Del Jalaphan who uses a Japanese tag, has been having a terrible time making the minimum weight.

"If the title is vacated, Mayol would be automatically available to bid anew for the world 105-lbs title," Salud explained.

But before Mayol gets back on the road, Salud suggested the 24-year-old boxer must be made to undergo a drastic overhaul in training.

Mayol should be taught the discipline of a true prizefighter. He must start behaving like a professional.

* * *

"*Kawawa si* Matsuoka, *sobra bait, todo gastos* (Matsuoka should be pitied, he's too kind and very generous," Salud said.

Yasuo Matsuoka is the amiable Japanese newspaper advertising/circulation magnate who manages Mayol, often caring for the fighter from Mandaue City more kindly than he would for his own son.

But there lies the other fault. In caring for his boxer, Matsuoka also tends to be soft.

Salud did agree that the Japanese manager is sometimes too good to be true.

But what Mayol should do to repay the manager's fatherly concern is indulge in honest hard work.

No question about the skills, not to mention guts.

"He just lost steam, he tired down in the second half," said Salud, who saw it all from ringside at the Korakuen Hall.

* * *

Terry Carter, who yielded his contractual right over Mayol to Matsuoka for close to P4 million, was also in Tokyo over the weekend.

He bared serious flaws that he had observed in Mayol's preparation for the championship chase.

Carter said he had checked on Mayol more than a couple of times and found the boxer just sitting around, doing nothing, when he should have been killing himself to reach the peak form required in the championship.

Respected Cebu sportsman Tony Aldeguer, who discovered and initially developed Mayol, said the talented boxer did not visit or train even once in his gym during the final stretch of training in Cebu.

"Mr. Aldeguer knew all the while Mayol was not a hundred percent but could not do anything," noted Manila Bulletin's premier boxing writer Nick Giongco.

* * *

Giongo, together with this reporter, had refused to divulge the unsavory details in Mayol's regimen as bared by the two experts who had previously handled him.

However, there was an agreement that these discovered discrepancies would be made public if and when Mayol loses, a sort of postmortem.

Anyway, when Matsuoka, Mayol's manager, was asked about their next plan following his fighter's tragic loss to the 27-year-old defending champion, the Japanese could only stare blankly.

"Plans, what plans? Nothing now, we don't know," Matsuoka stammered at the lobby of the famed Tokyo Dome Hotel, where Mayol enjoyed the perks of luxury suite life before the title fight.

Now, as reported by Wakee Salud, Matsuoka has new, solid plans for Mayol.

The manager has also vowed that they would do better next time.

That, doing better, won't be easy.

In order to produce a truly disciplined world title-seeker, Matsuoka has to lay down new rules in charting Mayol's training regimen.

Mayol, the way he had behaved in his last fight, should deserve a manager who's both hard and strict.

Unfortunately, these harsh traits don't come as second nature to Matsuoka-san.

Matsuoka should instead hire a grizzled jail warden watch over his tardy world title hopeful.

Tour Pilipinas starts Friday

EIGHTY CYCLISTS CULLED OUT OF A GRUELING qualifying race in February and who have honed intensively for two months start their quest for fame and fortune in the 2006 Tour Pilipinas-Padyak Pinoy which hits the road Friday (May 12). The Padyak Pinoy, organized by the Dynamic Solutions Inc. (Dos-1) and presented by Tanduay Rhum, the country's No. 1 rhum, in cooperation with Wow Magic Sing, is now a compact eight-stage, eight-day race, a principal component of which are three treacherous climbs in the Cordilleras, Batangas-Cavite and Quezon. Also backed by Air21, Cossack Vodka, Mail and More, Sunbolt, Inca, Red Bull, Elixir, Sogo Hotel, Kool Pap, IWMI and Cargohaus, the Padyak Pinoy this Friday up to May 19. Warren Davadilla, seeking a second consecutive title and third overall, heads the cast that also includes former champion Arnel Quirimit and last year's runnerup Frederick Feliciano.

SHAKEY'S V-LEAGUE

DLSU stakes spotless record

ONE STREAK WILL BE SNAPPED WHEN unbeaten De La Salle and resurgent Philippine Christian U clash in the main game of the V-League presented by Shakey's at the Blue Eagle gym tonight.

But while La Salle is coming off a tough outing against University of the East to stretch its win run to four, PCU will enter the court oozing with confidence following its rousing victory over Ateneo last Sunday.

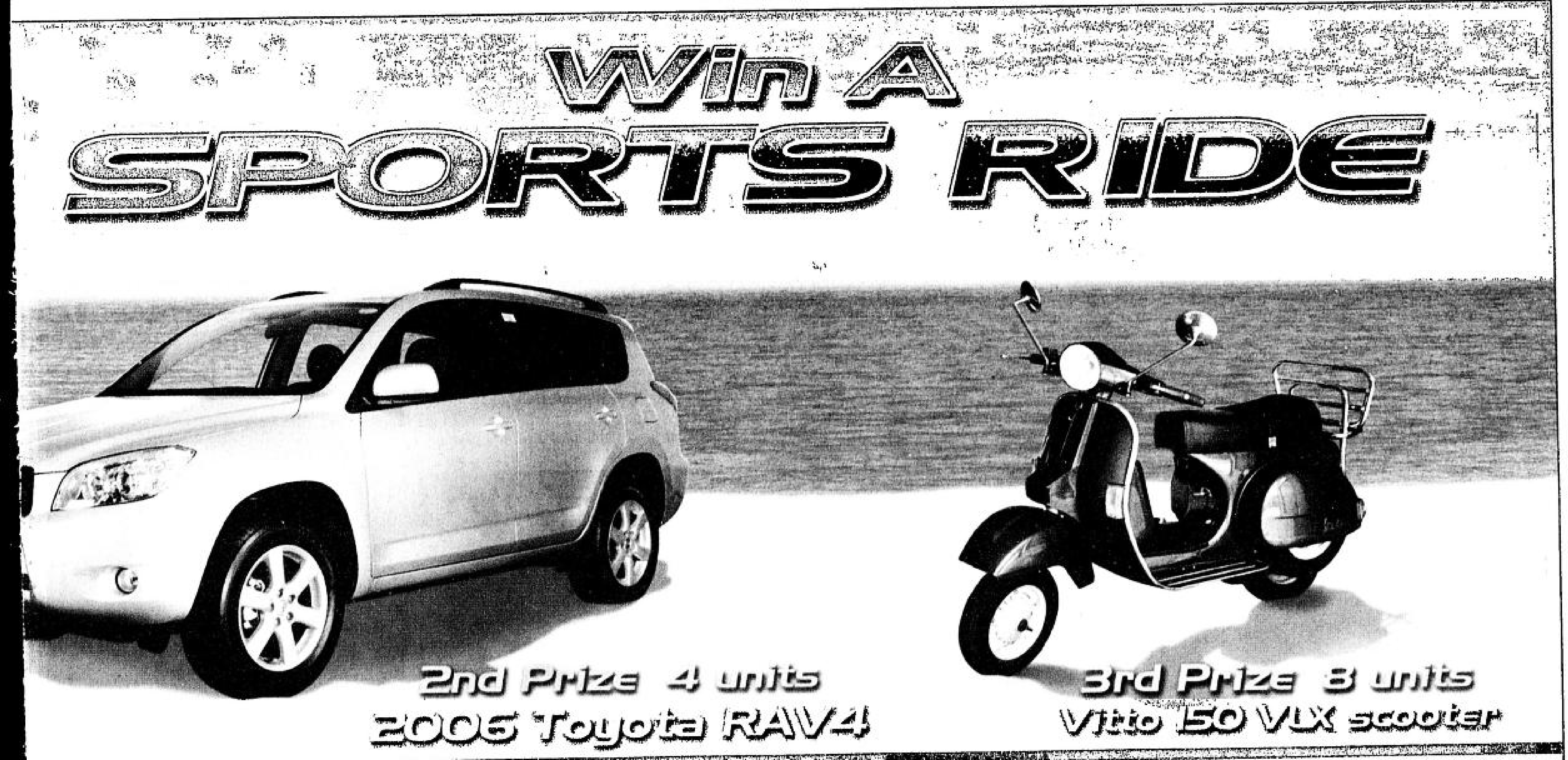
That should make the 6 p.m. encounter doubly interesting with the Lady Dolphins hoping to stop the Lady Archers on their tracks and sustain their own three-game run.

Cathlea Villaluz and guest players Lailanie Cervantes and Amelia Guanco will be the players to watch for Lyceum while power-hitting Manilla Santos, Desiree Hernandez, Ma. Enrica Llaguno and import Jindarat Kinchana of Thailand are expected to carry the cudgels for the Lady Archers.

Meanwhile, San Sebastian tries to keep the momentum of its big victory over Lyceum last Monday as it tackles FEU in the 4 p.m. opener of this event presented by Shakey's Pizza and organized by Sports Vision.

Admission is free. The games are aired on ABC-5 every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday starting at 4:30 p.m. Action in the event, backed by Accel, Mikasa, ABC-5 and ABC Sports, is expected to be fierce since the format is a single round elimination with the top five teams advancing to the double-round, carry-over semifinals.

SANTOS RYAN LIM



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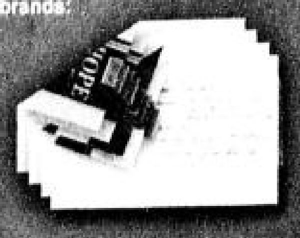

Only genuine and original packs of the abovementioned Fortune Tobacco oducts will be honored. All entries must have a portion of the pack seal to valid. Drop entries in drop boxes at designated drop centers.

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4.) The stores/outlets have a chance to win cash prizes in the major prize category (1st to 3rd prizes only). In the event that the major prize winner is also the store/outlet owner, he or she gets to win both the corresponding major prize and the cash prize for the store/outlet.

5.) If a winning entry does not bear the name and address of the store/outlet, the entry will still be valid but no store/outlet winner will be declared for the corresponding cash prize.

6.) Promo is from April 3, 2006 to July 14, 2006. All raffle entries will be accepted only until 12 midnight of June 30, 2006. No more raffle entries shall be accepted beyond this date.

7.) Major prize winners (1st to 3rd prizes) will be drawn LIVE on July 14, 2006, to be held during the 4th game of the PBA All-Filipino Conference Finals at the Araneta Coliseum and simulcast over ABC Channel 5 at 7PM. Other prize winners (4th to 6th prizes & consolation prizes) will be pre-drawn on July 7, 2006.

8.) Only official representatives from Fortune Tobacco Corporation and DOH-BFAD will validate all winning raffle entries during the draws.

9.) All raffle prizes (1st to 6th prizes) and store/outlet winners will be published in national dailies within two (2) weeks after the grand draw date. For consolation prize winners of FTC cigarettes, a separate list will be posted at all district/branch offices of Fortune Tobacco Corporation nationwide.

10.) All prizes are tax paid, not convertible to cash, and can be redeemed within 60 days after the end of the promo period.

11.) Major prize winners will be notified by registered mail and/or by phone calls on when and where to claim their respective prizes.

12.) When claiming prizes, winners must present the registered mail and two (2) valid ID's bearing their photos and signatures. In case the claimant is unable to comply, he or she must execute an affidavit to verify and establish his or her identity.

13.) As for the store/outlet winners, they must also present the registered mail and two (2) valid IDs bearing their photos and signatures, and a copy of their business permit.

14.) Prizes not claimed sixty (60) days after the publication of the winners will be forfeited.

15.) All employees of Fortune Tobacco Corporation, its marketing arms, advertising agencies, and DOH-BFAD, as well as their relatives up to the 2nd degree of consanguinity are not eligible to join.

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SPORTS

Chinese aces join RP Open

POWERHOUSE CHINA IS bringing in two of the world's top 10 players when it competes in the first Bingo Bonanza Philippine Open Badminton Championships presented by PLDT Business Solutions set May 24-28 at the Philsports Arena.

Chen Hong, the world's No. 6 player in the men's singles, displays his class act before local fans and against an equally talented field as he spearheads the rack Chinese squad's bid in the $120,000 tournament, a four-star tournament sanctioned by the International Badminton Federation.

The power-hitting Chen, who humbled compatriot and world No. 1 Lin Dan in the final to capture the All-England Open crown last year, will be joined in the team by Bao Chunlai, ranked No. 7 in the world in the men's singles.

China, whose main squad led by Lin swept the recent Thomas and Uber Cups in Japan, is also parading the world's No. 7 team in the ladies doubles—Jing Du and Yang Yu—making it the team to beat in the event sponsored by Bingo Bonanza, JVC, PLDT and Smart and organized by IMG.

Zhu Liu, Chen Lin and Wang Lin, ranked among the top 25 in the world, will carry China's bid in the women's singles while Sun Junjie and Xu Chen head the Chinese men's double team.

Also entered are Malaysia, Germany, Singapore, India, Canada, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, England, Vietnam, Austria, Thailand, Finland and host Philippines.

CHEN

9-ball stakes P1 million

THE BRAGGING RIGHTS OF being the first official national champion and the P1 million that goes with it will be at stake in the Philippine 9-ball Championship on Aug. 4 to 19 at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

Sixty-four of the country's top cue artists are expected to battle it out in the event sanctioned and organized by the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines, BSCP officials announced yesterday at the PSA forum at the Pantalan Restaurant function room in Manila.

"This [is] the first time that the BSCP is conducting an official tournament to crown a national champion," said BSCP chair Yen Makabenta, who appeared in the session sponsored by the Manila Sports Council and Pagcor together with BSCP president Ernie Fajardo and secretary-general Julius Nidea.

"Before this, we only had exhibition tournaments organized by private promoters, and they were not truly representative and comprehensive," Makabenta added in the public sports program sponsored by Pagcor and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

Fajardo said the event, which also serves as the country's dress rehearsal for the World Pool Championship, will send the champion and runner-up to the 2006 World Pool Championship that will be held at the Philippine International Convention Center in November. It also serves as one of the BSCP's criteria for inclusion to the national team to the Doha Asian Games in December.

TNT becomes La Salle team

In Huddle

Beth Celis

IF THE RED BULL LINEUP IS DOMINATED by former Ateneo Blue Eagles, Talk 'N Text has just become its collegiate archrival.

"We have become a La Salle team," said TNT governor Ricky Vargas, an Ateneo alumnus, after the recent acquisition of former Green Archers RenRen Ritualo and Don Allado, who have both previously played under coach Derick Pumaren, himself a La Salle alumnus.

All told, there are six Greenies in the TNT squad now, to include MacMac Cardona, assistant coach Tonichi Yturri and Poch Juinio who finished his elementary and high school studies at La Salle Greenhills.

Ironically, TNT's top bossman Manny V. Pangilinan, is an Ateneo Alumnus and the chief financial backer of the Blue Eagles.

"*Wala na kaming makuha* from Ateneo, *kasi kinuha nang lahat ng* Red Bull," Ricky said in jest.

***

With the two new additions to the Phone Pals, Derick feels his team is complete.

"*Wala nang kulang. Kumpleto na,*" he said.

According to him the first day of practice with the two new Phone Pals was "very good."

"You can feel the excitement within the team and you can see the potential. We'll struggle at the start, *siyempre*, because of the adjustments, but we'll be alright," Derick said.

***

Three important messages were contained in a press release e-mailed to me by the BAP about a week ago: First, that the Fiba Central Board which met last March 31 in Hongkong, has thrown the MOU between the POC and Fiba Secgen Patrick Baumann in the trashbin;

Second, that the management of Philippine affairs in relation to Fiba will now be the responsibility of Fiba-Asia which will hold an election this June and not Baumann;

And Third, that the one and only way the Fiba suspension on the Philippines can be lifted is by reinstating the BAP in the POC.

Frankly, I've been puzzled. All has been very quiet lately on the BAP and POC fronts.

Could this be the proverbial calm before another storm?

***

Reader Giovanni Nicolasora, Customer Care Officer of BCI Asia Construction, begs to disagree with the observation of PBA marketing head Jack Ruby regarding the recently-concluded All-Star Weekend in Cagayan De Oro.

"The CDO All-Stars was very good, but it is not the best. There were many before it that were better," Giovanni said, citing at least four editions which were most memorable to him as a fan.

Giovanni has probably forgotten the exact dates and some places but he remembers the shining moments that occurred in past All-Star Games.

"The assist of Sonny Jaworski to teammate Mon Fernandez for the winning basket; the 50-point performance of the late Arnie Tuadles in Cebu; the looping layup of Kenneth Duremdes at the buzzer; North team's victory over the Southern All-Stars in Ilocos Norte last year, these moments will burn in my memory forever," said Giovanni, also an avid fan and researcher of boxing.

According to him, the record 1,626 punches thrown by Mexican boxer Oscar Larios happened in a 12-round fight and not in one round.

"His hands are very busy atop the ring, even busier than Manuel Medina, who was beaten by Luisito Espinosa years ago in Japan to wrest the world featherweight title," Giovanni said.

Larios goes up against Manny Pacquiao this July in Manila.

Granny Goose trips Montaña

By Jasmine W. Payo

GRANNY GOOSE CERTAINLY REDEEMED ITself in grand fashion.

After getting swept by cellar-dwelling TeleTech, the Tortillos toppled the league-leading Montaña Jewels, 88-73, in the PBL Unity Cup yesterday at the San Andres Gym.

"Our one-week preparation did us well," said Tortillos coach Robert Sison. "(Our losses to TeleTech were) because of immaturity, we still need that killer instinct."

Explosive off the bench, Alfie Grijaldo fired eight of his 18 points in the decisive stretch in the fourth period to help the Tortillos keep the fourth spot at 6-5.

Giving up its solo lead, Montaña fell into a tie for first place with Toyota Otis at 8-3.

Earlier, the Magnolia Spinners only needed Kelly Williams and Arwind Santos to put up their typical numbers to forge an 88-79 victory over the TeleTech Titans.

The Spinners, coming off rare back-to-back losses, recovered their rhythm with Williams scoring a game-high 26 points plus 13 rebounds.

More than improving Magnolia's record to 5-6, coach Koy Banal hopes last conference's champions have snapped out of their slump.

"I hope the team finally realized what it takes to win a ball game," said Banal.

While Magnolia revived its bid to advance into the next round, TeleTech's own quarterfinal chances just got slimmer after dropping to 2-9.

GAMES TOMORROW
(Olivarez Gym)
2 p.m.—Hapee-PCU vs TeleTech
4 p.m.—Toyota Otis vs Granny Goose

The scores:

First Game

MAGNOLIA 88—Williams 26, Santos 22, Valenzuela 10, Rizada 7, Chan 5, Co 4, Misolas 4, Almeda 3, Te 3, Barcellano 2, Bombeo 2, Jones 0, Isip 0.

TELETECH 79—Capus 18, Latoreno 13, Gelig 9, Doruelo 8, Tang 7, Villamin 7, Duncil 6, Tolentino 5, Estrada 4, Mercado 2, Dizon 0, Sierra 0, Magdadaro 0.

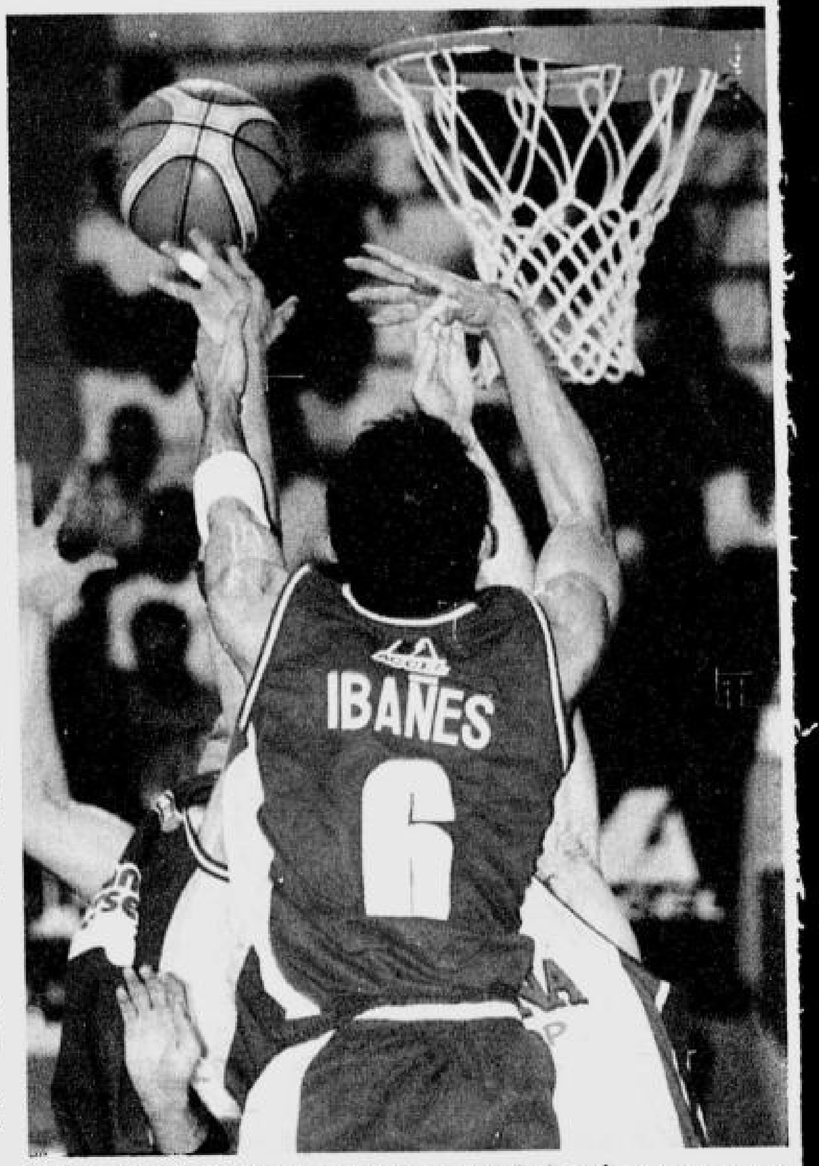
Quarters: 20-25, 44-42, 62-60, 88-79

Second Game

GRANNY GOOSE 88—Grijaldo 18, Saldua 15, Concha 12, Quiñahan 8, Latonio 7, David 7, Cruz 6, Santos 6, Ibañes 4, Ababon 3, Ferrer 2, Alfad 0, Dela Peña 0.

MONTAÑA 73—Magpayo 15, Compton 14, Rodriguez 12, Vergara 7, Bonus 5, Dela Cuesta 5, Bagulon 4, Atablanco 4, Guerrero 3, Espiritu 2, Juntilla 2, Evangelista 0, Bono 0.

Quarters: 20-22, 37-36, 59-56, 88-73



GRANNY Goose's Jireh Ibañez tries to control the boards. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

RP Open organizers racing to raise fund

By Jong Arcano

HAS THE PHILIPPINE OPEN GOLF CHAMpionship lost its charm?

Corporate support for the country's national championship is coming in trickles and organizers are racing against time to raise the needed money for the Open that returns to Wack Wack east on May 25-28.

"Getting the sponsors (for the Philippine Open) has become awfully difficult," Farren Hotham of the Asian Tour's marketing group tasked to obtain around $750,000 (about P39 million) for the event's total financial package told the INQUIRER yesterday.

"It's been a real battle and it's quite amazing," said Hotham of the very slow pace of sponsorship confirmations.

Patrick Young of the Asian Tour is also planing in today to make a final evaluation of the finances. He is also expected to sign major deals today.

What would be first to go if the sponsorship expectations are not met is the planned live coverage of the Open by ESPN that would be beamed live to 266 million televiewers all over the world.

Hotham, however, assured that the 90th staging of the Open is pushing through no matter what.

As this developed, one of the Open's top draws, Frankie Miñoza, remains undecided. His participation is being awaited to generate excitement more than the participation of the current stars of the Asian Tour.

Angelo Que, who finished tied for seventh in last week's SK Telecom Open in Korea, has entered to head the campaign of the local pros in a tournament that is expected to offer about $200,000 in prize money.

Que is one of 13 tournament winners of the Asian Tour in the roster and one of 40 Filipinos already confirmed. These includes rookie pro Juvic Pagunsan, Jerome Delariarte, Gerald Rosales, Danny Zarate, the top 20 pros in the Order of Merit, 10 qualifiers and six sponsored players.

Adam Le Vesconte, the 2005 winner at Mt. Malarayat, and Canadian Rick Gibson, also a former Open champ now residing in the country, are among the foreign entries.

Abdon, Uy gain top slots

JOHN KIER ABDON and Cebu-based Kathleen Uy scored a 75 and 77, respectively, to emerge as the top qualifiers in Class A at the start yesterday of the DHL-WWWExpress national age-group championships at the Villamor Golf Club course.

The vastly improved Abdon finished the 18-hole stroke play three shots clear of Gino Bunyi and Jae Yang on a day when pre-tournament favorite Miko Yee stumbled with an 82 and wound up as the seventh seed.

Uy was two strokes ahead of Beverly Mendoza in the girls side and will be facing No. 4 Kristina Leonen in today's match play phase of the tourney organized by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines and the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

In Class B, Chepe Dulay's 79 allowed him to grab the top seeding from Marcel Puyat who made an 81.

EDGAR See, Peter Kawsek, Isaac Go and Mike De Joya finished 3rd Runner-Up in the Ford National Team Shootout Eliminations in Tagaytay Highlands.

Ford slates 3 satellite finals

HOSTILITIES HEAT UP IN THE FORD NATIONAL Team Shootout starting Thursday when the Satellite finals for Luzon North, Luzon South and Luzon East get going at different venues.

The Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed Luisita Golf and Country Club plays host to the Luzon North Satellite finalists on May 11 with the teams from Camp John Hay, Mimosa, Royal Northwoods and the hosts vying for three berths in the Grand Finals.

The Luzon South Satellite tees off the next day at the Mt. Malarayat Golf and Country Club involving teams from Malarayat, Tagaytay Highlands, Sta. Elena and Canlubang.

Wack Wack Golf and Country Club's fabled East course, site of this year's Philippine Open, tests the finalists in the Luzon East Satellite on Saturday with teams from Alabang, Eastridge, Forest Hills, Manila Golf, Valley Golf and the host club disputing the section's Grand Finals berth.

The tournament, which lured about 2,200 players from all over the country, is a modified four-man scramble for teams from the Federation Golf Clubs with a total minimum handicap of 50.

"It's a fun format to play and was designed with the average golfer in mind," said Swing Magazine associate editor Mike Besa. "After all, how often do these golfers get a chance to represent their club in a national tournament?"

The top three teams from each Satellite will advance to the two-day Grand Finals slated May 25-26 at The Orchard and Sta. Elena, respectively.

Traders face Landmaster

GAME TODAY *(Mandaue City Cultural and Sports Complex)*
5:30 p.m.—Mantawi Traders vs Cebu Landmaster-Toledo

MANDAUE CITY—THE MANTAWI TRADERS host Cebu Landmaster-Toledo at the Mandaue City Cultural and Sports Complex today in the resumption of the ML Kwarta Padala Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) First Conference.

Toledo and Mantawi are already booked to face each other in the opening round of the Visayas Division semifinals next week with the Landmaster five of realtor Joe Soberano and Coach Leoncio "Jun" Tan enjoying the home court advantage in the best-of-three series. Toledo has a 5-2 win-loss card while Mantawi carries a 3-4 record entering their final elimination round game.

Idle M. Lhuillier Kwarta Padala-Cebu swept its eight elimination round games to earn the top seeding and a semis date with the fourth seed, either the 1-5 Toyota-Iloilo Warriors or the 0-6 West Negros College Mustangs. Both Western Visayas squads were locked in a tight battle at press time last night at the Talisay City Gym with the winner getting a foothold for the last semis slot.

The Landmasters routed Mantawi, 81-67, last March 25 at Toledo City's Marcelo A. Barba Sports Center to begin Visayas Division hostilities.

Tuason comes up big in Formula 3

DESPITE SHORT PREPARATION, JP Tuason of Tuason Racing School came up with a big haul Sunday in the kickoff leg of the 2006 Asian Formula Three at the Batangas Racing Circuit.

Tuason bagged two runners-up and one champion trophies in the Promotional class against a talented field of 14 drivers.

He only learned that he'd be racing a week before the event. His engine arrived Monday and only tested it before the time trials.

Moreover, on the same race weekend, he also had to supervise the TRS Ford Focus Celebrity and Media Cup final round, which he organized.

"It was like a tension-filled weekend," said JP, a former Karter of the Year who's supported by Ford, Addict, PCSO, Bosch, Petron Ultron, Standard Insurance, Goodyear, Red Horse, Oakley, H&R, K&N, Philippine Star, C! Magazine, AF3, Rota, Starbrights, Sikkens, Manila Speedzone, Palmer Asia, Bravura and Has travel.com.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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Fisherman's son is new Pinoy Pop Superstar

By Nini Valera

THE SON OF A FISHERMAN from Navotas was declared the "Pinoy Pop Superstar" in the second year of the reality talent search contest of GMA 7.

GERALD Santos RUDY ESPERAS

Gerald Santos, 15, bested six other grand contenders in a series of showdowns before a live audience of about 5,000 people at the Araneta Coliseum on Saturday, where the competition was taped for telecast over GMA 7 on Sunday.

The third year high school student of Tangos Elementary School in Navotas, won P1 million, a two-bedroom house and lot from Filinvest, a Chevrolet Optra, P300,000 worth of services from Vicki Belo, free beauty services for a year and P50,000 from Ricky Reyes, and P100,000 worth of clothes from Edwin Tan and Pepsi Herrera. He also won a record deal with GMA Records and a one-year management build-up contract with the network.

Gerald is the youngest contestant in the talent show, which included two finalists—Rosmarie Tan of Los Angeles, California, and Elise Estrada of Vancouver—from a parallel search in the US and Canada.

An undefeated champion for four weeks, Gerald, who was also named Viewers' Favorite after he brought in more than 300,000 text votes, bested six other grand contenders, including Aicelle Santos, another crowd favorite and the first and only eight-week undefeated champion of the show.

Backstage, Gerald told the press that he would use his prize money to buy more clothes, a luxury that his parents, Danilo and Marian could not afford to buy.

"I've used all of my clothes during the road tour of the show,"

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Potential trouble at the top

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WHO ARE THE ENTERTAINMENT world's top stars? This year's front runners are **Tom Cruise, Tom Hanks** and **Jim Carey**—in that order. Therein lie several instructive tales:

Cruise is on top due to his solid reputation as a reliable hitmaker. After "War of the Worlds" made mega-millions, he's now following it up with his latest blockbuster, "Mission: Impossible III," which is similarly expected to break the bank.

Aside from his box-office clout, Cruise is also very much in the news due to his love life, his occasional "strange" behavior on TV (jumping excitedly on **Oprah** Winfrey's couch, etc.), and his penchant for getting into very public arguments.

TOM Hanks

For instance, he "lectured" "Today" show host **Matt Lauer** on psychology, and criticized **Brooke Shields** for taking anti-depressant medication. Shields promptly lashed back at Cruise, and women viewers generally sided with her.

This made some Hollywood insiders fear that female viewers might boycott Cruise's latest starrer. If "M:i:III" is a big hit, that would debunk such fears, however.

Incidentally, some female viewers are also said to be "down" on Cruise because of what they feel is his way of making his much younger love, **Katie Holmes**, so "dependent" on him.

That's subject to different interpretations, of course, and his current film's box-office grosses in the next couple of weeks should objectively affirm or contradict that view, at least as far as its dollar-and-cents repercussions go.

But the main point is clear: Tom Cruise rules because of his media-genic combination of box-office clout and assertively colorful public persona.

For his part, Tom Hanks doesn't jump up and down on couches and romance women young enough to be his daughters, but he, too, is a consistent hitmaker. In addition, he's an award-winner, has dabbled in directing, and is an industry leader. That's why he's No. 2.

These days, however, Hanks' non-controversial image is changing, due to his involvement as lead star in the "combustible" film, "The Da Vinci Code," which opens later this month.

The film is so controversial that even Hanks' "good guy" perosna could be in for some rather fierce criticism—and even some *ad hominem* assaults.

Some people want to know: Why is he "lending" his good name to such a "hot" and potentially disturbing and even off-putting movie? Doesn't Hanks realize that, by agreeing to be associated with the film, he's lending credence to its speculative "attacks" against Christianity?

JIM Carey

The furor over the movie—and Hanks' involvement in it—is expected to heat up even more as its opening day looms. Only the nature and quality of the film itself can settle the score, one way or the other. So, come May 19, we'll know.

And, where does Hanks hope to be, after all this? If the movie passes muster, his reputation can withstand the blows. In fact, the controversy could even add to its cachet (Hanks "dares" to be non-conformist for a change, etc.).

But, if the majority of viewers see the actual film as an unenlightened "attack" on Christianity, even "good" Tom Hanks could be caught in the cinematic tsunami's deadly undertow.

BO Bice

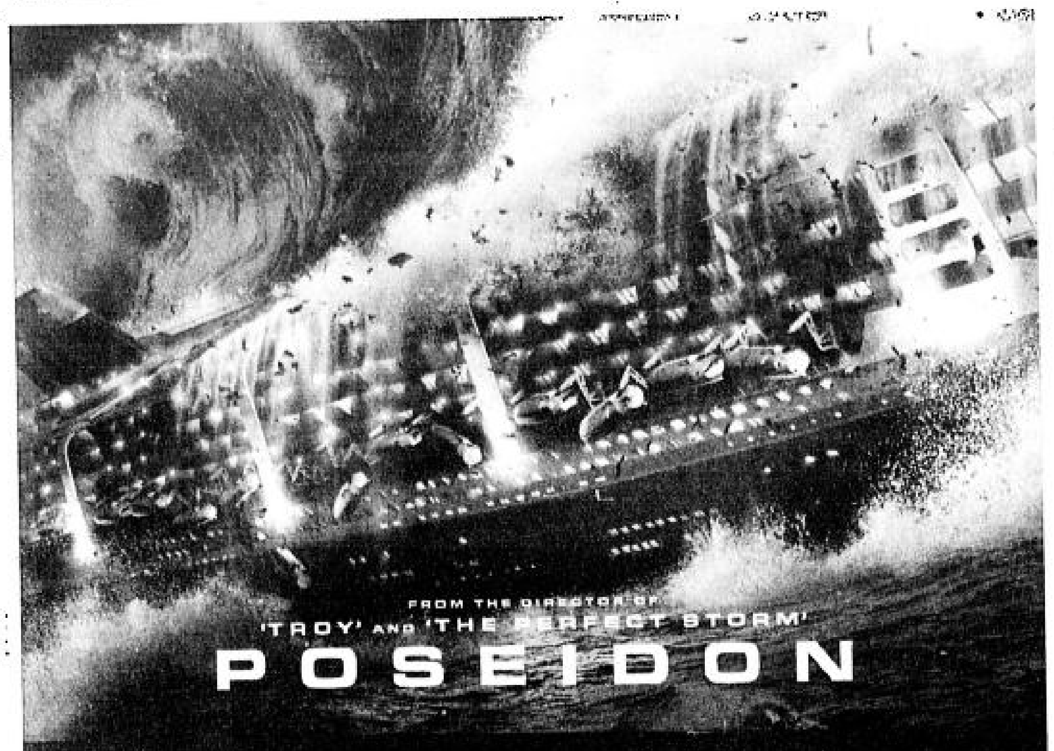
And, where is Jim Carey in all this? Comfortably in the No. 3 slot, with no controversy or looming disaster to ruffle his feathers or ruin his day. Lucky guy!

Village people

THE VILLAGE People, the novelty disco band of the 1970s, is back with a remastered album of its most popular tunes. The album, "We Want You," contains 17 tracks, including four remixes of "In the Navy," "Go West," "YMCA" and "We Want You."

Bo Bice

"AMERICAN Idol" runner-up **Bo Bice** has released his debut album, "The Real Thing," produced by **Clive Davis**. The album teams Bo with **Chad Kroeger** (of Nickelback), **Richie Sambora, Jon Bon Jovi, Ben Moody, John Shanks, Marti Frederiksen** and Swedish producer **Max Martin**. Cuts include "Nothing Without You," "Hold On To Me," "You're Everything" and "My World." Bo shares writing credits on "It's My Life" and "Valley of Angels."



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Cinema 1 - 1:00 PM, 3:20, 5:40, 8:00
Cinema 2 - 12:20 PM, 2:40, 5:00, 7:20, 9:40

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GREENBELT 3
Cinema 1* - 1:25 PM, 3:40, 5:55, 8:10, 10:25
Cinema 4** - 12:50 PM, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50
Cinema 5** - 2:30 PM, 4:45, 7:00, 9:15, 11:30
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		3 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 POSEIDON 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 POSEIDON 2:30, 4:45, 7:00, 9:15, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
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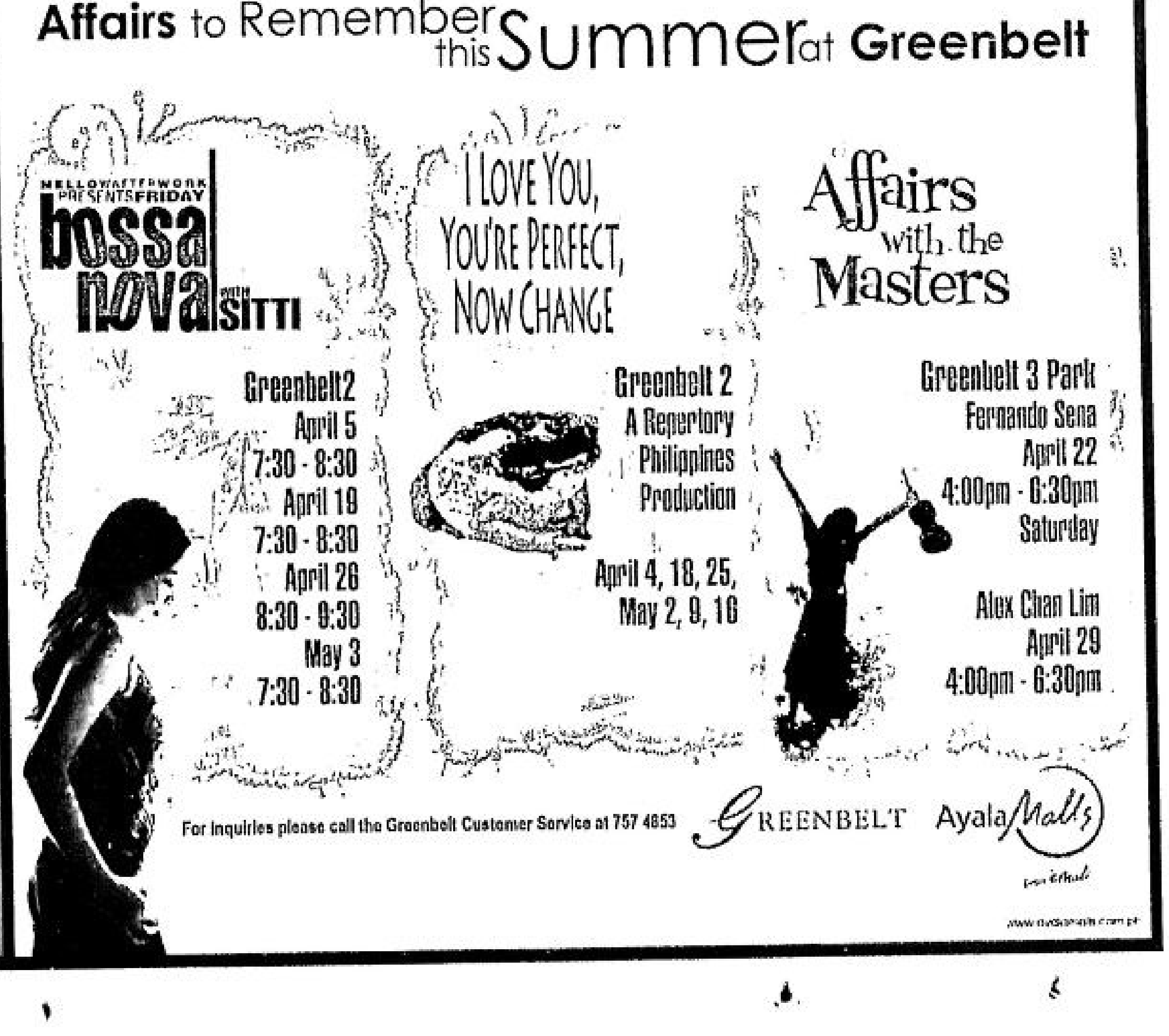

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Fisherman's son is new …

From page A2-1

NERVE-WRACKING moment for the final two: Gerald Santos and Aicelle Santos

PHOTOS BY RUDY ESPERAS

Gerald explained in Filipino.

He's keeping the car

He said the money was also a windfall for his parents, who are struggling to raise four children on a survival income.

Gerald said he would hang on to the car although he could sell it to buy a cheaper one.

"OK *lang*," he shrugged, when told that gasoline prices had risen to an all-time high.

The new "superstar" also downplayed Rosemarie's apparent protest over the results of the competition.

Rosemarie, 18, who represented the US in the search, had walked out of the show reportedly upon the instigation of her father, after she failed to make it as one of the top four. She did not participate in the production number of "Magsimula Ka" by the grand contenders, held before the announcement of the final face-off between Gerald and Aicelle.

Battle of the Santoses

Dubbed as the ultimate battle of the Santoses, the face-off had Gerald and Aicelle sing Danny Tan's original composition "Close To Where You Are." A break in the voice of Aicelle during her performance apparently caused her the crown, even if she had been a heavy favorite of the show's followers.

During the road tours, Aicelle showed superstar qualities and was named the Roadshow Superstar on Saturday for her performances in Manila, Cebu, Davao, Iloilo and Baguio.

For the face-off, the top two Santoses were judged for superstar quality (60 percent) and musicality (40 percent) by the jurors composed of director Floy Quintos, Danny Tan, Jaya, GMA executive Wilma Galvante and GMA Records president Felipe Yalong.

Ironically, "Close To Where You Are" was clearly written for a woman even if Tan claimed that the song was arranged in two keys to accommodate both male and female performers. In spite of a pitchy patch in her rendition, Aicelle showed more passion in the song and delivered it with better diction than Gerald's unintelligible and lackluster performance.

But Gerald defended his victory: "There were judges out there who made the decision and they obviously thought I gave the best performance of the night."

Petrifying medley

It was the best performance except perhaps for the showdown between host Regine Velasquez and last year's winner Jonnalyn Viray who belted their way to a petrifying medley of songs that tested their vocals with a surfeit of high notes.

"*Duguan po kaming dalawa* (It was bloody)," quipped Regine. "We were both wearing white so you could see the blood."

HOST Regine Velasquez embraces last year's big winner Jonalyn Viray.

JUROR Jaya

The show, which took more than six hours to tape, opened with Regine descending to the stage from the ceiling. Singing "I Believe I Can Fly," with the grand contenders of the show's first and second seasons, Regine, in a harness secured by invisible piano wires, floated on stage—a stunning production number.

Favorite song

From among the seven grand contenders, the first to perform a favorite song was Rosemarie, who sang the soulful classic "Neither One Of Us" and received a score of 93 percent.

Next was Gerald, who sang "Kahit Isang Saglit," a Martin Nievera ballad, and got a score of 94 percent.

Aicelle followed with her classy styling of Whitney Houston's "All The Men That I Need," and was given a score of 92 percent.

Denver Regencia, whose daring performance of an updated '70s Bee Gees song, "How Can You Mend A Broken Heart" showcased his faltering falsetto and earned for him 88 percent.

Irra Jammal Cenina performed next and got only 84 percent for his efforts.

THE NEW superstar Gerald shares his victory with tearful mom Maryann and dad Danilo.

Harry Santos' rendition of Josh Groban's "Fly Me Up" earned for him 90 percent.

While revealing the score of a contender given by one judge, Regine explained that the total score would come from the five judges. This tally brought the competition into the next level where only four contenders remained: Aicelle, Gerald. Harry and Denver.

In the end, only one of the three Santoses prevailed and that was Gerald, the new Pinoy Pop Superstar.

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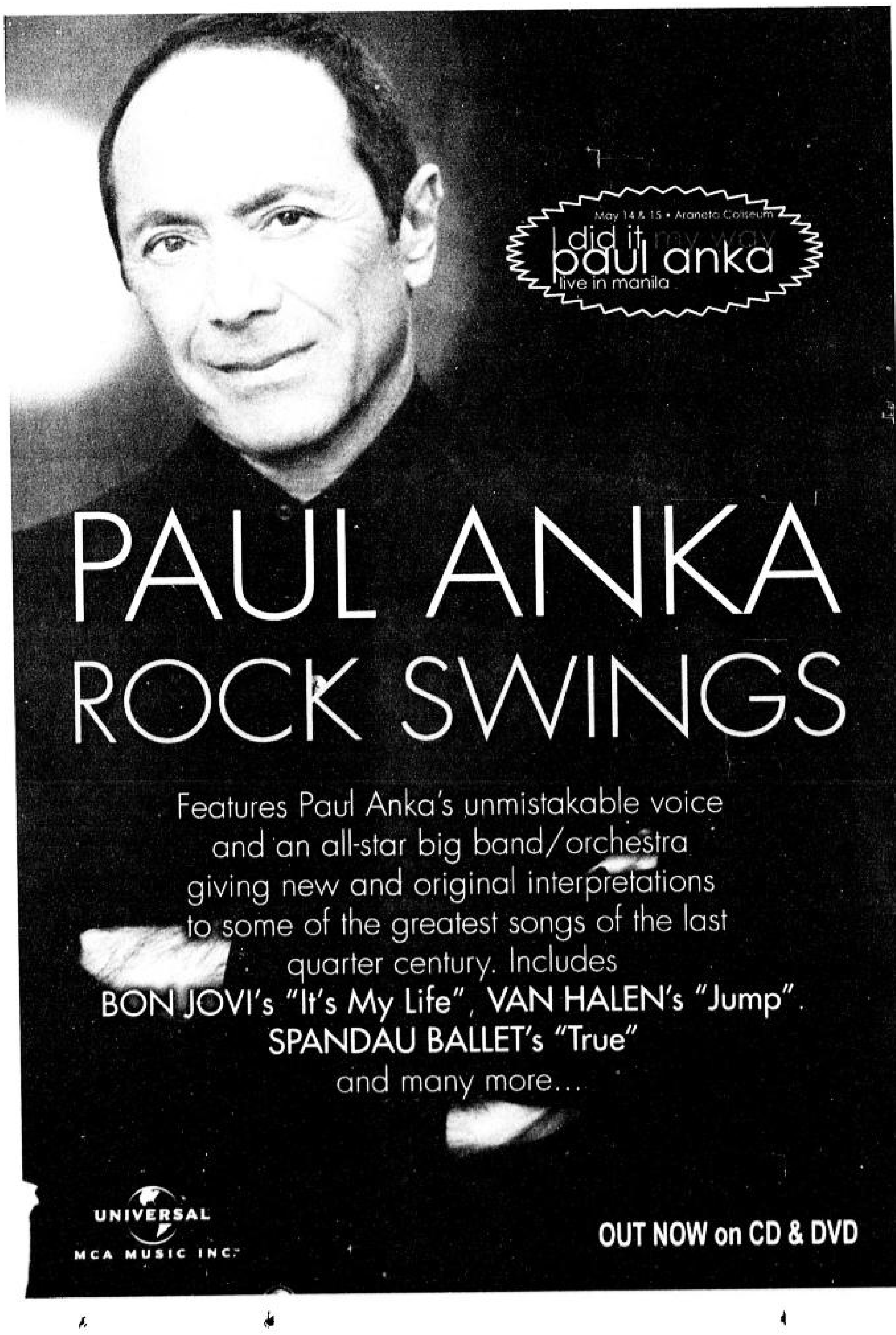

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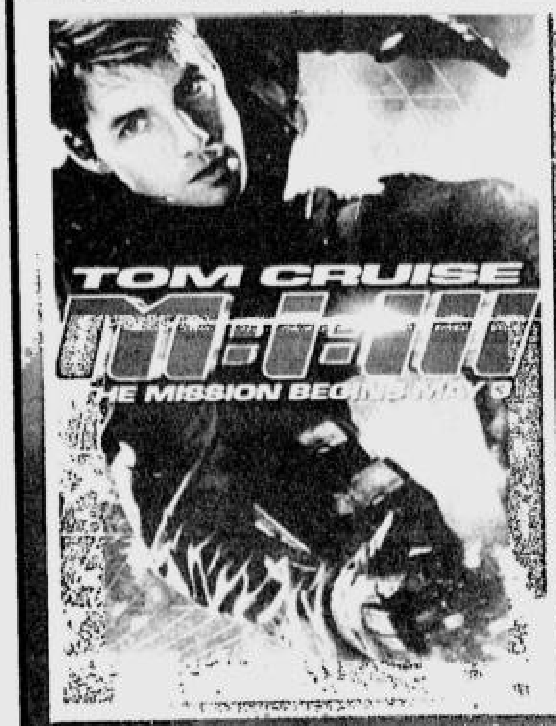

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1 M:i:III
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3 POSEIDON
4 POSEIDON
5 AQUAMARINE
6 REINCARNATION
7 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
8 D LUCKY ONES
9 SILENT HILL
10 M:i:III
11 THE WILD
12 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 POSEIDON
2 SILENT HILL
3 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
4 M:i:III
5 D LUCKY ONES
6 AQUAMARINE
7 REINCARNATION
8 M:i:III

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 PSEIDON
2 CHINESE TALL STORY
3 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
4 M:i:III

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 SUBMERGED
2 ICE AGE 2
3 PAMAHIIN
4 M:i:III
5 SILENT HILL
6 REINCARNATION
7 POSEIDON
8 THE WILD
9 D LUCKY ONES
10 PAMAHIIN
11 M:i:III
12 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 POSEIDON
2 POSEIDON
3 M:i:III
4 SILENT HILL
5 REINCARNATION
6 D LUCKY ONES
7 AQUAMARINE
8 SENTINEL
9 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
10 PAMAHIIN

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 POSEIDON
2 M:i:III
3 SILENT HILL
4 POSEIDON

SM CITY SAN LAZARO
1 THE WILD
2 M:i:III
3 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
4 SILENT HILL
5 M:i:III
6 POSEIDON

SM CITY MANILA
1 M:i:III
2 AQUAMARINE
3 REINCARNATION
4 POSEIDON
5 THE WILD
6 POSEIDON
7 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
8 M:i:III
9 SILENT HILL
10 POSEIDON
11 D LUCKY ONES
12 PAMAHIIN

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 POSEIDON
2 POSEIDON
3 M:i:III
4 M:i:III
5 SENTINEL
6 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
7 AQUAMARINE
8 REINCARNATION
9 D LUCKY ONES

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA
1 POSEIDON
2 M:i:III
3 SILENT HILL
4 AQUAMARINE

SM CITY SUCAT
1 SILENT HILL
2 POSEIDON
3 M:i:III
4 POSEIDON

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 POSEIDON
2 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
3 POSEIDON
4 M:i:III

SM CITY MARILAO
1 POSEIDON
2 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
3 POSEIDON
4 M:i:III

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
2 POSEIDON
3 M:i:III
4 SHE'S THE MAN

LUZON

SM CITY BACOOR
1 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
2 PAMAHIIN
3 POSEIDON
4 SILENT HILL
5 M:i:III
6 POSEIDON
7 D LUCKY ONES
8 AQUAMARINE

SM CITY STA. ROSA
1 SUBMERGED
2 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
3 M:i:III
4 POSEIDON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 POSEIDON
2 M:i:III
3 SILENT HILL
4 PAMAHIIN
5 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
6 SUBMERGED

SM CITY LUCENA
1 NANNY McPHEE
2 M:i:III
3 D LUCKY ONES
4 EIGHT BELOW

SM CITY MOLINO
1 M:i:III
2 M:i:III
3 THE WILD
4 SUBMERGED

SM CITY CEBU
1 M:i:III
2 POSEIDON
3 SUBMERGED
4 THE DARK
5 D LUCKY ONES
6 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
7 M:i:III
8 POSEIDON

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY ILOILO
1 D LUCKY ONES
2 RESERVED
3 POSEIDON
4 M:i:III
5 POSEIDON
6 SILENT HILL
7 RESERVED
8 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR

SM CITY DAVAO
1 POSEIDON
2 SHE'S THE MAN
3 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
4 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
5 PSEIDON
6 M:i:III

SM CITY CAGAYAN
1 POSEIDON
2 POSEIDON
3 APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
4 M:i:III

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A disappointing 'Mission'

LOS ANGELES—FEWER PEOPLE chose to accept Tom Cruise's latest mission, a possible sign that the odd behavior of Hollywood's biggest star may have turned off viewers.

Paramount's "Mission: Impossible III" debuted with $48.025 million, a solid opening yet well below industry expectations and almost $10 million lower than the franchise's previous installment, according to studio estimates.

Industry analysts had expected the movie to open in the range of "Mission: Impossible II," which debuted with $57.8 million in 2000, and Cruise's "War of the Worlds," which premiered with $64.9 million last year.

Open book

Rob Moore, Paramount's head of worldwide marketing and distribution, said he did not believe Cruise's private life had any impact on "Mission: Impossible III," directed by "Lost" creator J.J. Abrams.

"I don't think so. There's no question it concerns us if the press is writing about things other than the movie," Moore said. "If people are writing about his personal life, then by definition, they're not writing about the movie."

Cruise's antics in the past year or so, publicity over his romance with Katie Holmes and the tabloid blitz regarding their daughter Suri's birth in April may have left some moviegoers burned out or disenchanted with the actor.

Traditionally reserved about his private life, Cruise abruptly became an open book.

"Expectations were really high for this film. I think it's a good number, but people were obviously expecting better numbers," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations. "There's a lot to be said for how a star's public persona can affect a movie's box office."

"Mission: Impossible III" earned generally favorable reviews, some critics calling it the best in the franchise and many offering high praise for Academy Award winner Philip Seymour Hoffman, who plays Cruise's nemesis.

Along with potential Cruise backlash, the long six-year interval since "Mission: Impossible II" may have dulled audience appetites.

Worldwide total

Debuting in about 55 other countries, "Mission: Impossible III" took in $70 million, for a worldwide total of $118 million. Paramount noted that the new movie beat the $115 million worldwide debut of "Mission: Impossible II" in those same countries.

Factoring in higher ticket prices, the debut for "Mission: Impossible III" looks worse. About 7.3 million people saw the new movie, compared with 10.7 million over the opening weekend for "Mission: Impossible II" and 10.3 million for "Mission: Impossible," which opened with $45.4 million in 1996.

The weekend's other wide releases had fair to poor openings. Freestyle Releasing's horror flick "An American Haunting" debuted at No. 3 with $6.4 million.

New Line's family film "Hoot," adapted from Carl Hiaasen's novel about teenagers trying to save endangered owls, flopped with $3.4 million.

"Mission: Impossible III" led Hollywood to its seventh-straight weekend of rising revenues. The top 12 movies took in $99.4 million, up 27 percent compared to the same weekend last year.

Here's the week's top 10:

1. "Mission: Impossible III," $48.025 million
2. "RV," $11.1 million
3. "An American Haunting," $6.4 million.
4. "Stick It," $5.5 million
5. "United 93," $5.2 million
6. "Ice Age: The Meltdown," $4 million
7. "Silent Hill," $3.9 million
8. "Scary Movie 4," $3.8 million
9. "Akeelah and the Bee," $3.4 million
9. "Hoot," $3.4 million

AP

TOM Cruise in "M:i:III"

OPENING TODAY

Apoy sa Dibdib ng Kaaway

Stars Mark Lapid, Cristine Reyes, Elizabeth Oropesa, Roi Vinzon, Dick Israel, Jess Lapid Jr.

Directed by Jose Balagtas

Inspired by the tragic landslide in Southern Leyte, this action flick tells the story of a big-city policeman (Lapid) who returns to his sleepy provincial town, only to discover its forests ravaged by illegal loggers. He meets and falls for a nurse (Reyes), the daughter of the most corrupt logger in the area. Will love prevail for the star-crossed couple? Reyes says that the viewers, after watching the movie, will "be inspired to take care of the environment." This is the first team-up of Pampanga Governor Lapid and Starstruck finalist Reyes who are rumored to be "special friends." "He took good care of me during the shoot," Reyes says. The movie's premiere was held in Catarman, Samar, last week.

Poseidon

Stars Josh Lucas, Kurt Russell, Emmy Rossum, Richard Dreyfuss

Directed by Wolfgang Petersen

It's New Year's Eve and a 150-foot tidal wave capsizes a 20-story, 13-deck luxury cruise ship in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean. A small band of survivors is led by a career gambler (Russell) to safety, through the confusing labyrinth of the upside-down ship. They learn to depend on each other to survive. Based on Paul Gallico's novel and the 1972 disaster flick "The Poseidon Adventure," this remake is directed by the same man behind "Das Boot" and "The Perfect Storm." Peter Travers of the Rolling Stone raves: "It may be cheese, but [it] lays out a mighty fine spread... Petersen hits the action button and never stops whaling on it." Travers' verdict: "You'll end up entertained if you forgive the clichés and let Petersen grab you with the visuals." Dan Goldwasser of Soundtrack.net opines that the "music features a blend of orchestral and electronic elements, lending the score a contemporary feel."

Reincarnation

Stars Nagisa Sugiura, Yayoi Kinoshita, Ikuo Matsumara, Yuka Morita

Directed by Takashi Shimizu

A film crew shoots in a hotel where 11 people were murdered. The horror movie's lead actress, however, starts seeing spirits—including a gloomy girl cradling a horrifying doll. The star soon discovers that there's a connection between the hotel massacre and a recent spate of disappearances in Tokyo. Directed by the same "master of macabre" behind "Juon" and "Marebito," this screamfest is described by Movieseer.com as a "mysterious thriller that explores the complicated relationship between past and present." According to Travis Crawford of the Philadelphia Film Festival web site: "Shimizu has delivered a surprisingly traditional, linear ghost story that may be his most accessible... and engaging." Russell Edwards of Variety cautions that "J-Horror fans may be disappointed by the low scare count, but what it lacks in frights, it makes up for with a well-realized yarn ... Performances are solid, but the characters are too distant to relate to."

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12:30, 3:20, 6:10, 9:10
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2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
11:30, 2:15, 5:00, 8:00, 10:45
PG-13

3 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00
PG-13

4 AQUAMARINE
1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00
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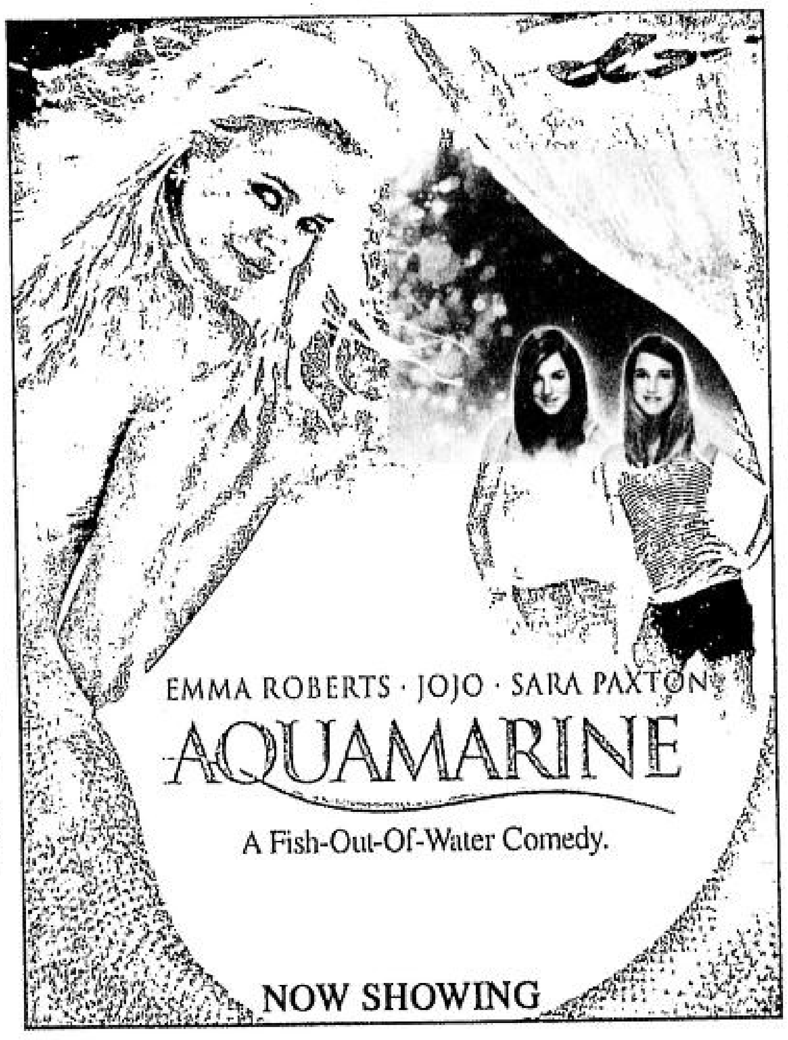
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AQUAMARINE
12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30

SILENT HILL
1:40 / 4:20 / 7:00 / 9:40

Ali MALL CINEMAS
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2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: 3
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3 AQUAMARINE
4 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
5 SLITHER
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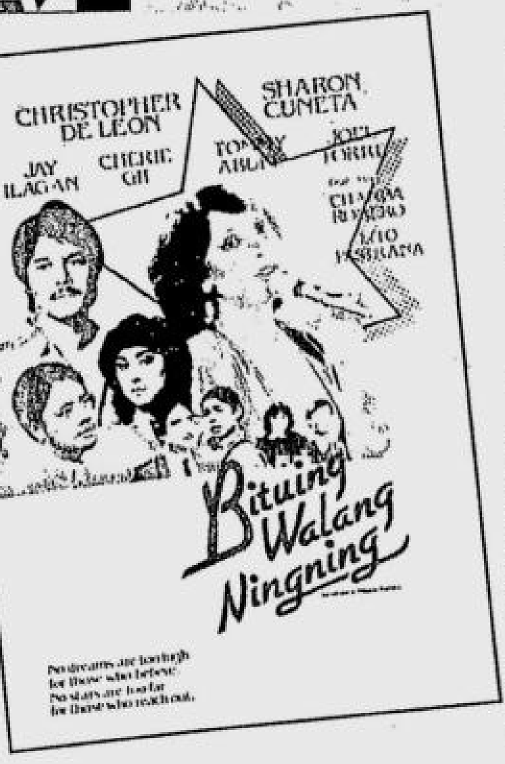
Komiks invades the small screen

Sudsy serials are crying to make a comeback on TV. Question is, will they be a hit, here and abroad?

By Bayani San Diego Jr.



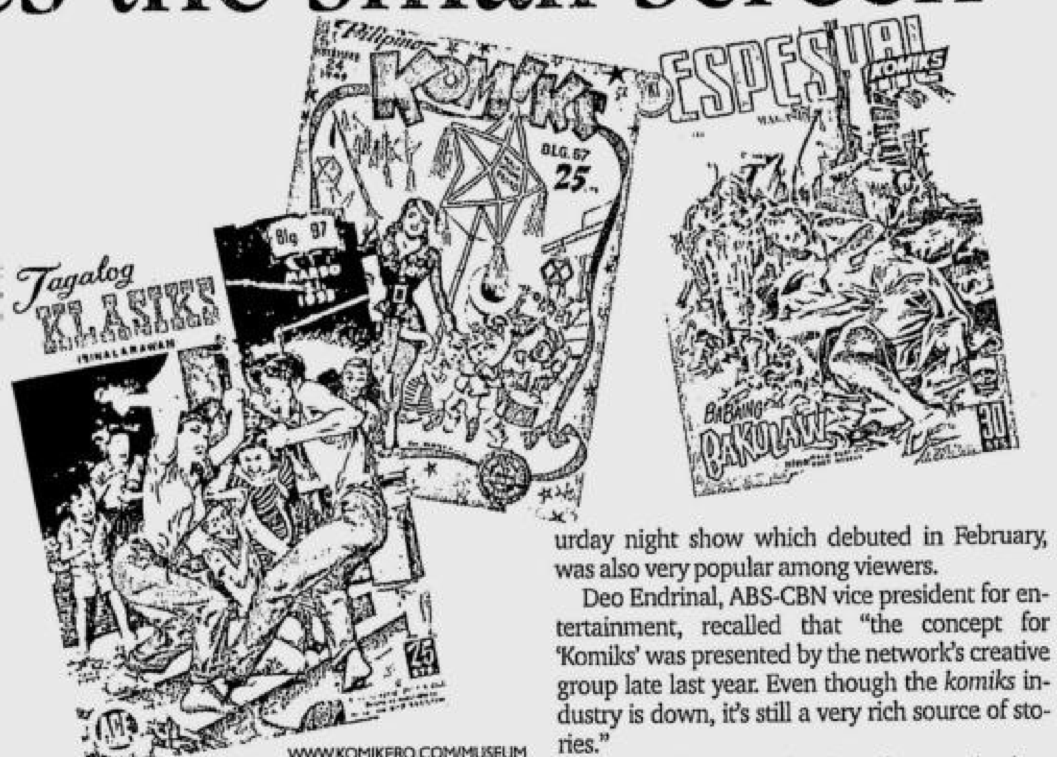
THEY WERE ONCE DISMISSED AS passé—as dead as the medium that produced them.

But now, *komiks* serials are enjoying a revival on television.

"Today's kids are not familiar with radio and *komiks* stories that were turned into big movies in the 1970s and 1980s by Seiko, Regal and Viva," said Socorro "Cory" Vidanes, ABS-CBN senior vice president for television production. "For them, these stories are new material. That's why they rate well."

Vidanes cited as example "Gulong ng Palad," a 1950s radio serial and 1970s TV soap opera, which the Lopez-owned network turned into a *telenovela* this year.

Vidanes added that "Komiks," ABS-CBN's Saturday night show which debuted in February, was also very popular among viewers.



WWW.KOMIKERO.COM/MUSEUM

Deo Endrinal, ABS-CBN vice president for entertainment, recalled that "the concept for 'Komiks' was presented by the network's creative group late last year. Even though the *komiks* industry is down, it's still a very rich source of stories."

Among the serials that have been revived on "Komiks" are "Kamay ni Hilda," "Inday Bote," "Blusang Itim," "Agua Bendita" and "Bunsong Kerubim."

The last one was particularly inspired because it starred the original "Kerubim," Matet de Leon—this time, playing the mother of the baby angel.

Not just nostalgia

Endrinal said that these *komiks* stories "connected with the audience, especially with the TFC (The Filipino Channel) subscribers, Filipinos who are based abroad."

"It's not only about nostalgia, but also about going back to basic storytelling after all those *fantaserye* (fantasy-based soap) and reality shows," Vidanes said.

Endrinal reiterated that the network had acquired the *komiks* titles not from movie companies Viva, Seiko and Regal, but directly "from the original authors—like Nerissa Cabral, who wrote 'Bituing Walang Ningning' for Pilipino Komiks."

Cabral told INQUIRER Entertainment that she wasn't bothered when ABS-CBN writers tinkered with her story.

"They only added a background story," Cabral pointed out. "In any case, they consulted me before making those changes. I'm actually very flexible. If I were stubborn, I wouldn't have sold the story to them in the first place."

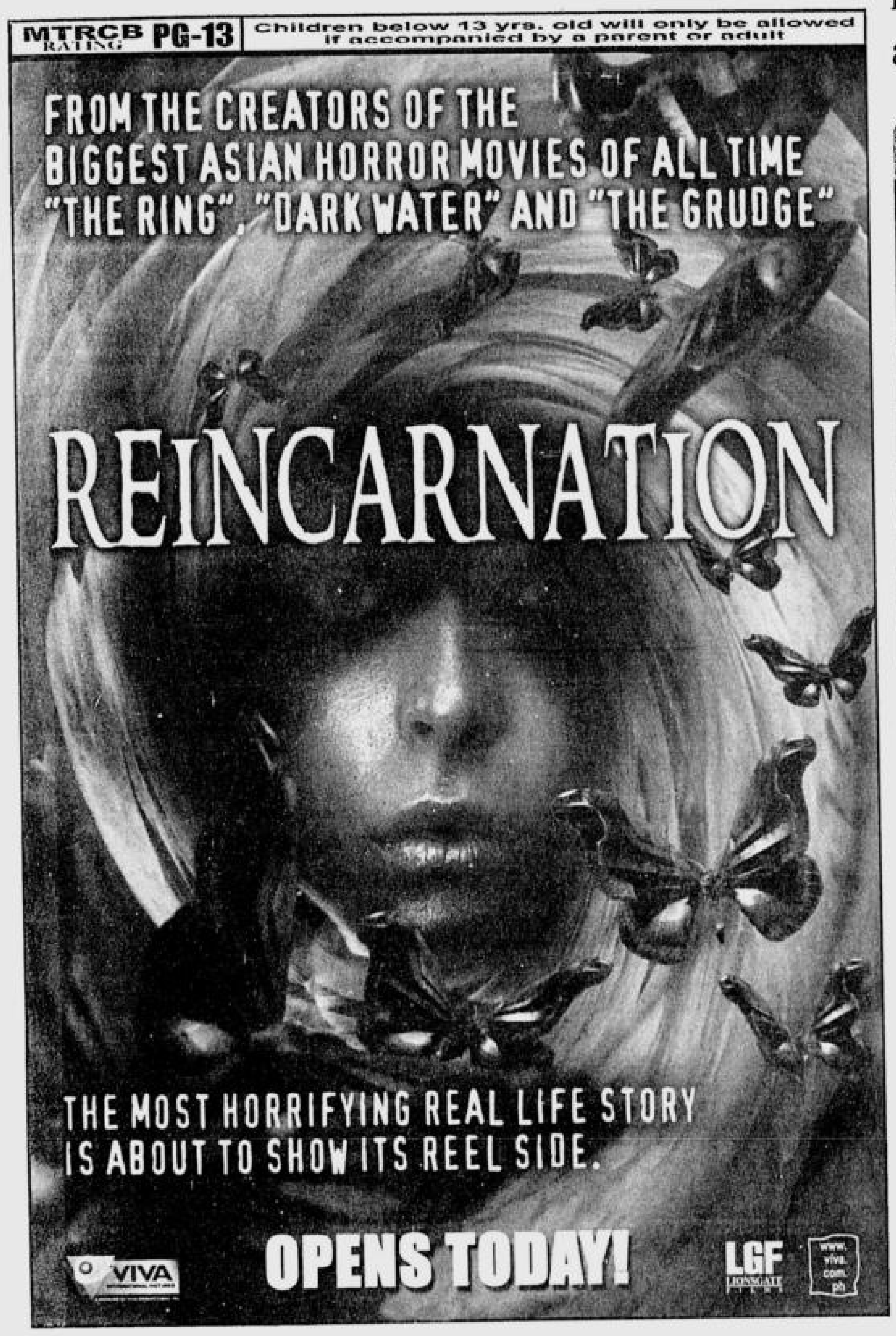
She said that when her *komiks* novels were turned into movies in the 1980s by Viva, she only dealt with Mina Aragon.

"Our agreement was that they could only film it once," Cabral recalled. "Since I already brought millions to Viva, I don't think it would bother them if I resold the story to ABS-CBN now. After all, 'Bituin' is my intellectual property."

Endrinal said that "Bituin" was too big for the one-hour "Komiks" format, so it was turned into a *sineserye* (movie-based soap) that would run for an entire season (three to four months), starting May 15.

"We have to come up with something bigger than the movie," Endrinal explained. "We added new characters and introduced new storylines."

The soap's leading man Ryan Agoncillo jestingly called it "Bituing Walang Ningning Reloaded."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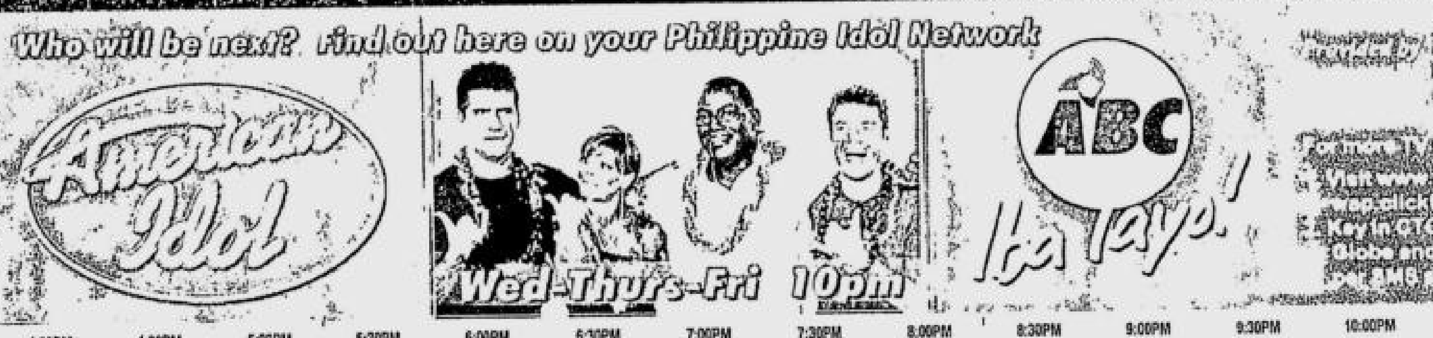
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE Wednesday May 10, 2006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Cinema One		Ikaw At Ang Gabi				Tanging Yaman				Mano-Mano 3			Persona	Abakada Ina (9:15 PM)				Two-Timer	
Cinemax			Arabian Nights (3:20 PM)		No Secrets (4:45 PM)			Fool For Love (6:15 PM)				Above The Law			Glass Trap (9:40 PM)			The Hunted (11:15 PM)	
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Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouseworks	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven / That's So Trendy Week	The Amazing Zorro			American Dragon	Buzz on Maggie	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Finding Nemo	
ESPN		Pro Billiards '04 World Summit of Pool NY USA		Pool: Snooker World Pool Masters '03 Holland		Asian X Games '05 Presented by Kia		Motorsport Asia	NBA Anthology	Pool: Snooker World Pool League '04 Poland		Pool: Snooker World Pool League '04 Poland		Sportscenter Asia	Classic Boxing: J. Frazier vs. O. Bonavena		Classic Boxing: F. Patterson vs. O. Bonavena		Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Will & Grace 4	Friends 10	Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Veronica Mars 2		Beach Girls		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	Cold Turkey		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
EWTN	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	Chaplet Of Mercy/ Angelus	Faith In Motion	Truth In The Heart	Rosary With Mother Angelica	EWTN Gallery	Suffering And The Love Of God	EWTN Catholic Classic	The Church & The Poor: Building Bridges	Mother Angelica Live Classics		Daily Mass Live		Holy Land Rosary/ Angelus	One In Their Hearts: Holiness Of Priesthood	Parable	Rome Reports	EWTN Presents	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Agawin Mo Man Ang Lahat	Now and Forever (3:15 PM)	Snow White Sweet Love		Saiyuki	Dragonball Z	Gokusen	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Majika	Love Of The Condor Heroes		Jewel In The Palace		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel		Mcleod's Daughters IV		The Witch's Daughter				Bewitched	The Nanny	Judging Amy		Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		Judging Amy		Returning Lily			Judging Amy (11:45 PM)
HBO				A Soldier's Story			Raising Waylon (5:45 PM)				Class Act (7:20 PM)			Paycheck				American Splendor	
Hero TV	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Angelic Layer	Tokyo Underground	Metal Fighter Miku	Beyblade G-Revolution	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Naruto	Mirmo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr Ajikko	D.I.C.E	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Angelic Layer
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Global Family Series		Japan Video Topics		ME TV		PTA Best Of The Philippines		Up Close And Personal	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman		Heist		Velocity		X-Men	Street Smarts	Mad TV		That 70s Show	My Name Is Earl	The Late Show David Letterman		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Premium Blend	Primetime Glick	Chappelle Show
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	30 Minute Meals	Wolfgang Puck	Sweet Dreams	Interiors By Design	Decorating Style	Decorating Cents	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Food 911	E! Entertainment Special		Style Star	Martha		Fine Living Special		Intimate Portrait	
MTV Philippines		Laguna Beach		MTV Screen	Pop Inc		MTV Hits (with SMS)			Get Spotted	MTV Hits	MTV Screen	MTV Hits	TRL		Laguna Beach		Summerbreak Sessions Sugarfree	Flaming Lips Yeah Yeah Yeah
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXLOG	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Live!		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXLOG
National Geographic	Wildlife Diary	Nat'l Geographic Specials: Land of the Tiger		Marine Machines: River Jordan - Waters Of Life		Totally Wild Killer Coral Reef Spawning	Planet Wild S1-02 Poisonous	Top 5 - Wild Family Wild Family Secrets	Top 5 - Wild Family Wild Family Secrets	WOW! Crocodiles: Here Be Dragon		About Asia Muay Thai (Martial Arts)		Nat'l Geographic Specials Amazing Moments Pt.1				Is It Real? Crop Circles	
NBN		Teledyaryo Alas-Tres		Teledyaryo Sports Alap	Dyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Siya?	Teledyaryo W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo Final Edition				Bantay OCW With Susan K			
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Imortal				I Love You He Loves Me You Love Her				Fight Night 5				Baby Tsina				Kaagaw
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zentrix	Kaleido Star	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Magic Ring	Irene	Noel	Project 11	Now Na!		News On Q	Balikbayan		Irene	Over The Green Fields
RPN 9						Global Window	RPN Aksyon News	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	NBA Semis/ Conference Finals						Newswatch Now	Cargo For Truth		Kerygma
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping		Quantum Global		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports							2006 ABC Mud Dots Finals		NBA Jam	Sagupaan	Billiards: Efren vs Lopez & Bal C'ship Finals						Solar Sports Desk	Table Tennis World Team Champs	
Sports Plus		Arena Football Grand Rapids @ Austin								NBA Game CSF Game 2					NASCAR TBA Richmond				
Star Movies			Hunt For Justice (3:40 PM)			The Perfect Neighbor				Opening Night (7:20 PM)	Baby Geniuses (7:20 PM)			Commando			Moonraker		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		American Idol		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	American Idol/ Beauty And The Geek		Grey's Anatomy		Smallville/ The Apprentice (Series 4)		Seinfeld	American Idol/ Beauty And The Geek
Studio 23	Bewitched	Yu-Gi-Oh 3 & 4				Batman Beyond	Xiaolin Showdown	Spells	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	World's Craziest Videos		CSI (8:20 PM)	24 Season 4 (9:10 PM)		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

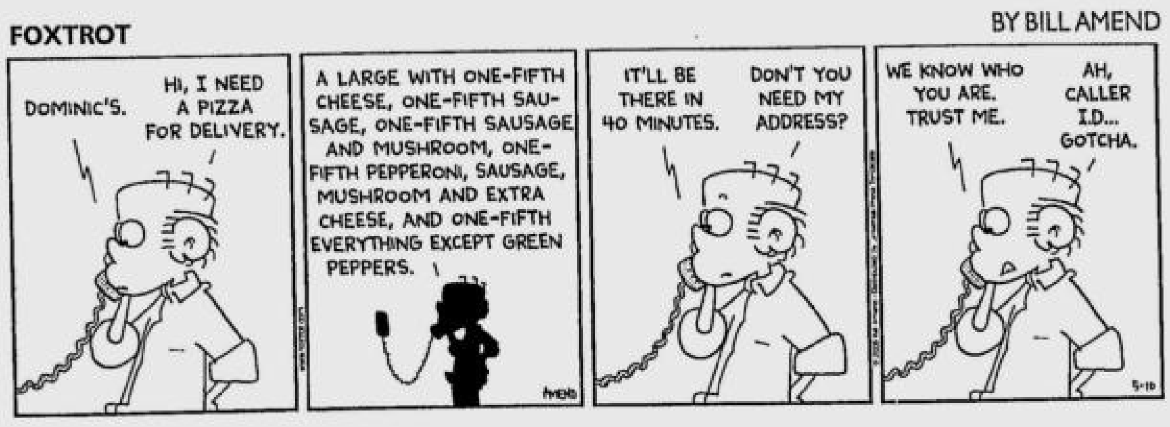
TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

ComicRelief

e-mail feedback at arts@inquirer.com.ph

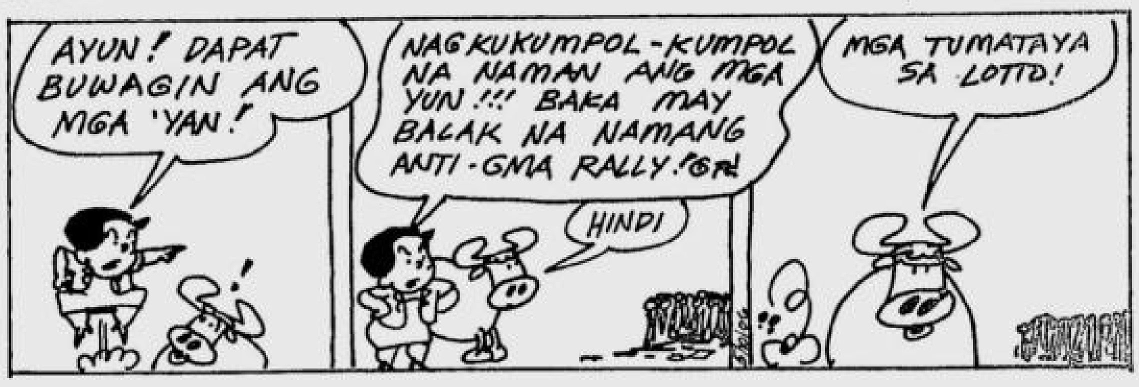
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


DOMINIC'S.
HI, I NEED A PIZZA FOR DELIVERY.
A LARGE WITH ONE-FIFTH CHEESE, ONE-FIFTH SAUSAGE, ONE-FIFTH SAUSAGE AND MUSHROOM, ONE-FIFTH PEPPERONI, SAUSAGE, MUSHROOM AND EXTRA CHEESE, AND ONE-FIFTH EVERYTHING EXCEPT GREEN PEPPERS.
IT'LL BE THERE IN 40 MINUTES.
DON'T YOU NEED MY ADDRESS?
WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE. TRUST ME.
AH, CALLER I.D... GOTCHA.
5-10

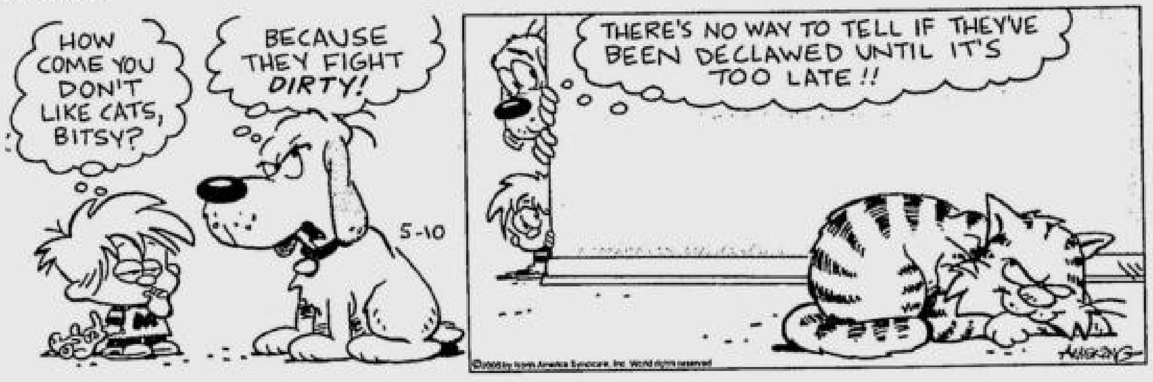
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


AYUN! DAPAT BUWAGIN ANG MGA 'YAN!
NAGKUKUMPOL-KUMPOL NA NAMAN ANG MGA YUN!!! BAKA MAY BALAK NA NAMANG ANTI-GMA RALLY!
HINDI
MGA TUMATAYA SA LOTTO!

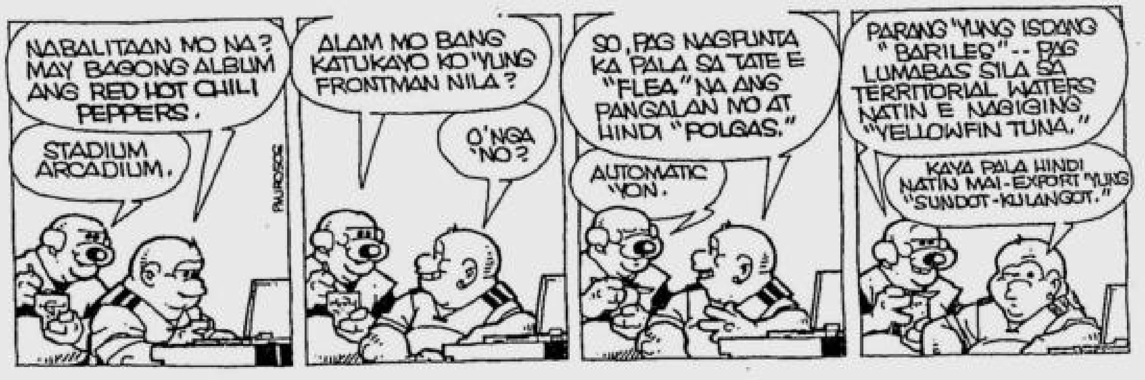
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


HOW COME YOU DON'T LIKE CATS, BITSY?
BECAUSE THEY FIGHT DIRTY!
5-10
THERE'S NO WAY TO TELL IF THEY'VE BEEN DECLAWED UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE!!

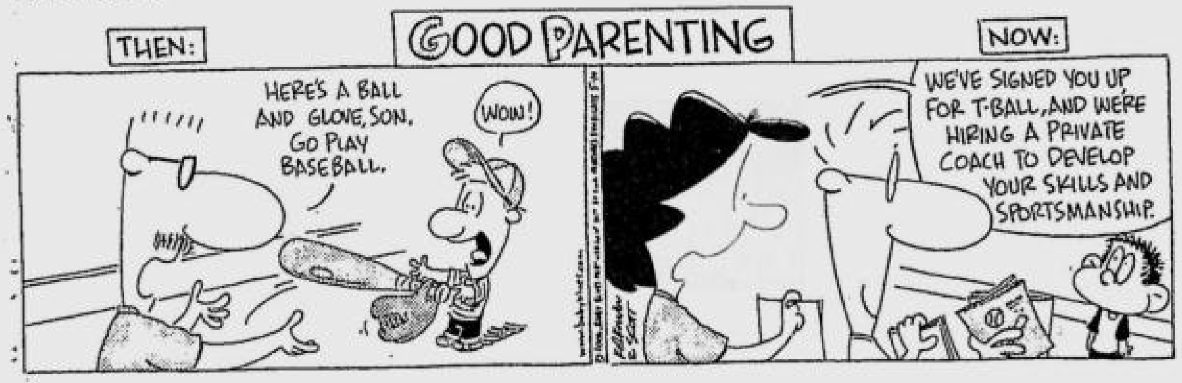
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


NABALITAAN MO NA? MAY BAGONG ALBUM ANG RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS.
STADIUM ARCADIUM.
ALAM MO BANG KATUKAYO KO 'YUNG FRONTMAN NILA?
O'NGA 'NO?
SO, PAG NAGPUNTA KA PALA SA TATE E "FLEA" NA ANG PANGALAN MO AT HINDI "POLGAS."
AUTOMATIC 'YON.
PARANG 'YUNG ISDANG "BARILES" -- PAG LUMABAS SILA SA TERRITORIAL WATERS NATIN E NAGIGING "YELLOWFIN TUNA."
KAYA PALA HINDI NATIN MAI-EXPORT 'YUNG "SUNDOT-KULANGOT."

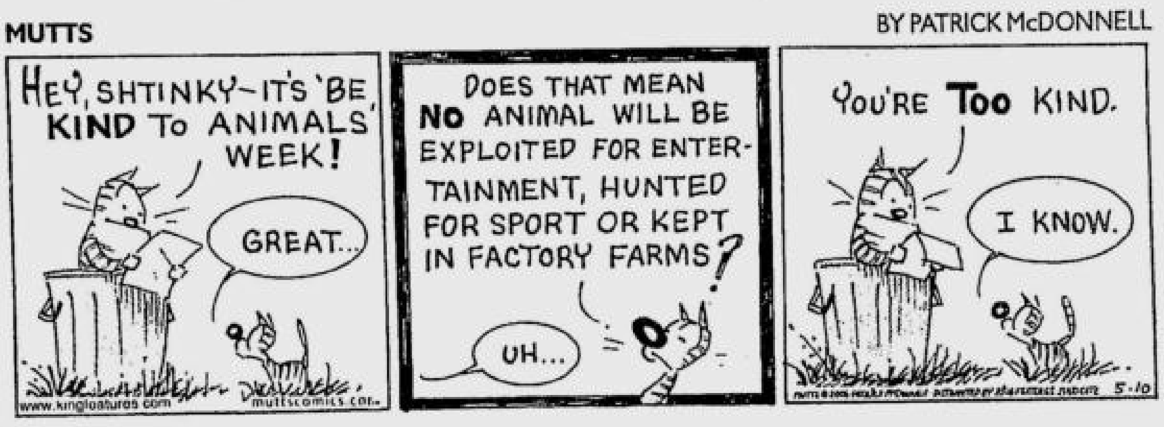
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


GOOD PARENTING
THEN:
HERE'S A BALL AND GLOVE, SON. GO PLAY BASEBALL.
WOW!
NOW:
WE'VE SIGNED YOU UP FOR T-BALL, AND WE'RE HIRING A PRIVATE COACH TO DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS AND SPORTSMANSHIP.

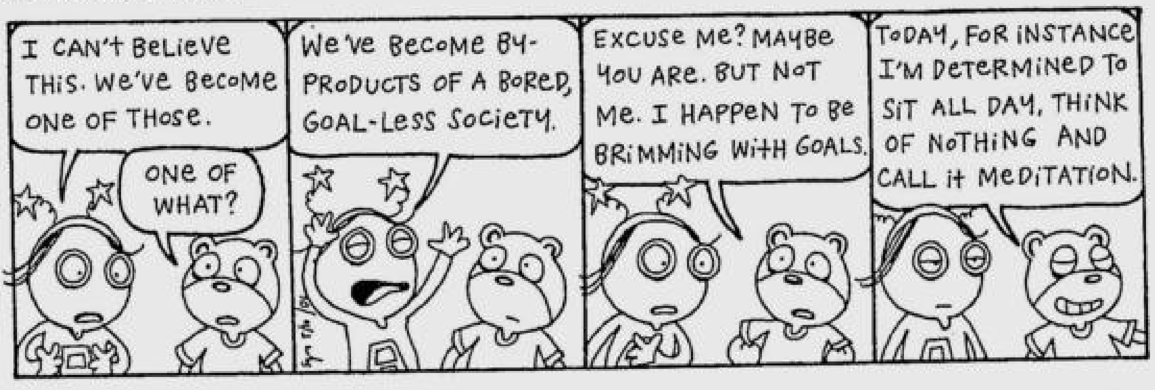
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


HEY, SHTINKY–IT'S 'BE KIND TO ANIMALS' WEEK!
GREAT...
DOES THAT MEAN NO ANIMAL WILL BE EXPLOITED FOR ENTERTAINMENT, HUNTED FOR SPORT OR KEPT IN FACTORY FARMS?
UH...
YOU'RE TOO KIND.
I KNOW.
5-10

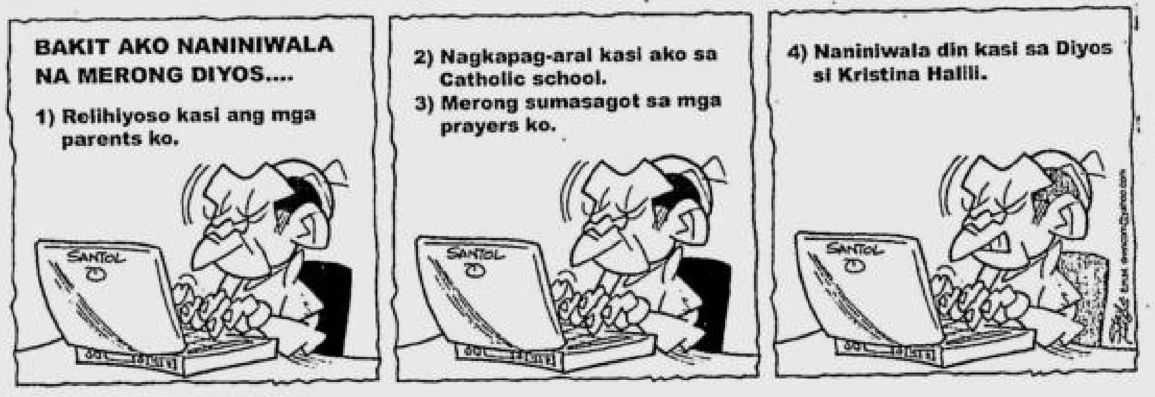
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS. WE'VE BECOME ONE OF THOSE.
ONE OF WHAT?
WE'VE BECOME BY-PRODUCTS OF A BORED, GOAL-LESS SOCIETY.
EXCUSE ME? MAYBE YOU ARE. BUT NOT ME. I HAPPEN TO BE BRIMMING WITH GOALS.
TODAY, FOR INSTANCE I'M DETERMINED TO SIT ALL DAY, THINK OF NOTHING AND CALL IT MEDITATION.

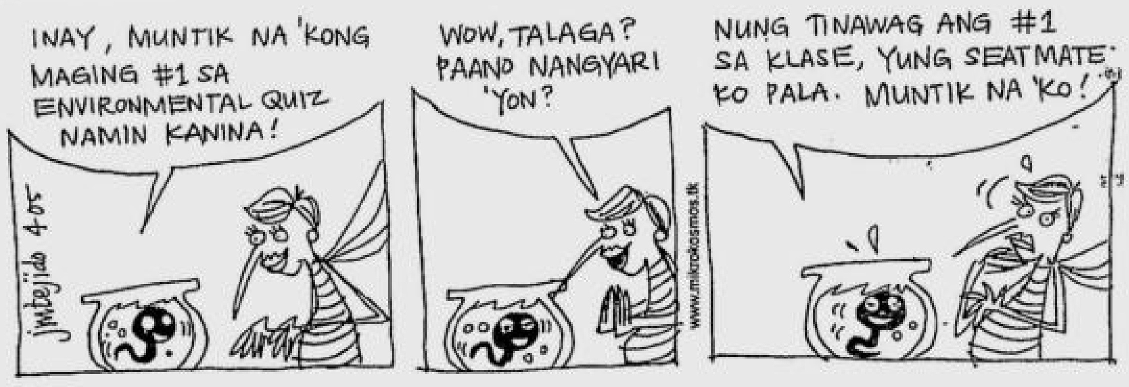
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


BAKIT AKO NANINIWALA NA MERONG DIYOS....
1) Relihiyoso kasi ang mga parents ko.
2) Nagkapag-aral kasi ako sa Catholic school.
3) Merong sumasagot sa mga prayers ko.
4) Naniniwala din kasi sa Diyos si Kristina Halili.
SANTOL

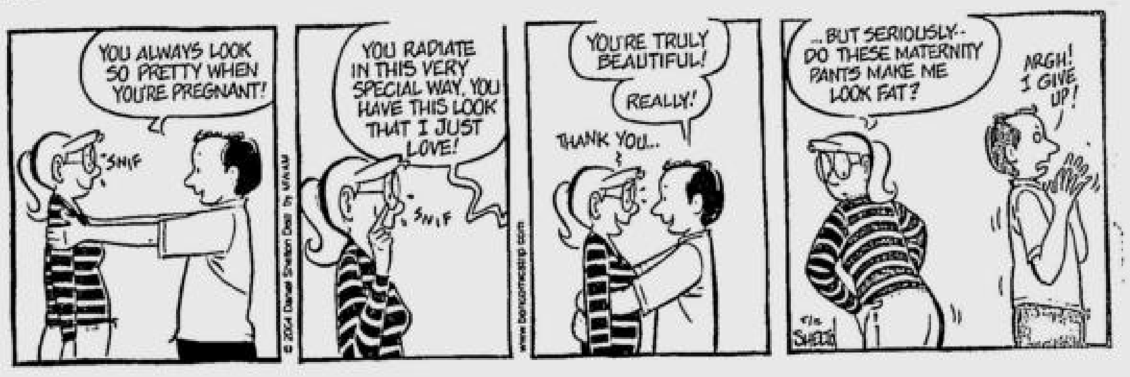
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


INAY, MUNTIK NA 'KONG MAGING #1 SA ENVIRONMENTAL QUIZ NAMIN KANINA!
WOW, TALAGA? PAANO NANGYARI 'YON?
NUNG TINAWAG ANG #1 SA KLASE, YUNG SEATMATE KO PALA. MUNTIK NA 'KO!
jmtejido 4-05
www.mikrokosmos.tk

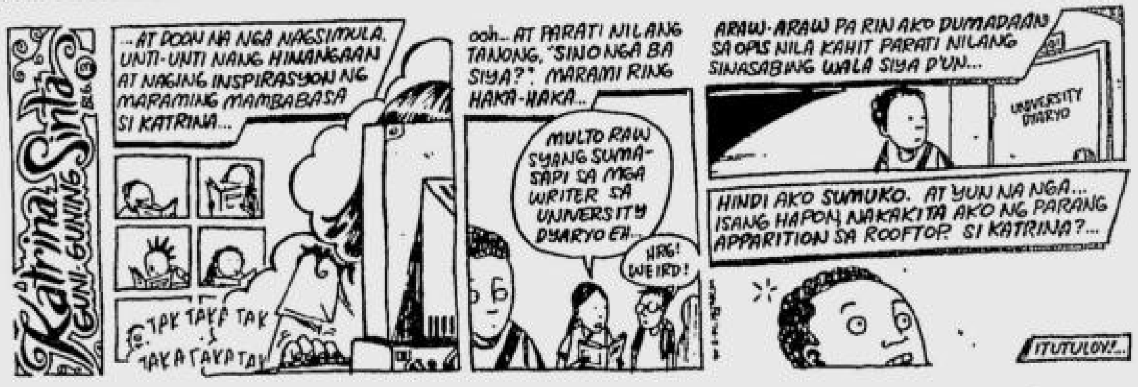
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


YOU ALWAYS LOOK SO PRETTY WHEN YOU'RE PREGNANT!
SNIF
YOU RADIATE IN THIS VERY SPECIAL WAY. YOU HAVE THIS LOOK THAT I JUST LOVE!
SNIF
YOU'RE TRULY BEAUTIFUL!
REALLY!
THANK YOU...
...BUT SERIOUSLY-- DO THESE MATERNITY PANTS MAKE ME LOOK FAT?
ARGH! I GIVE UP!

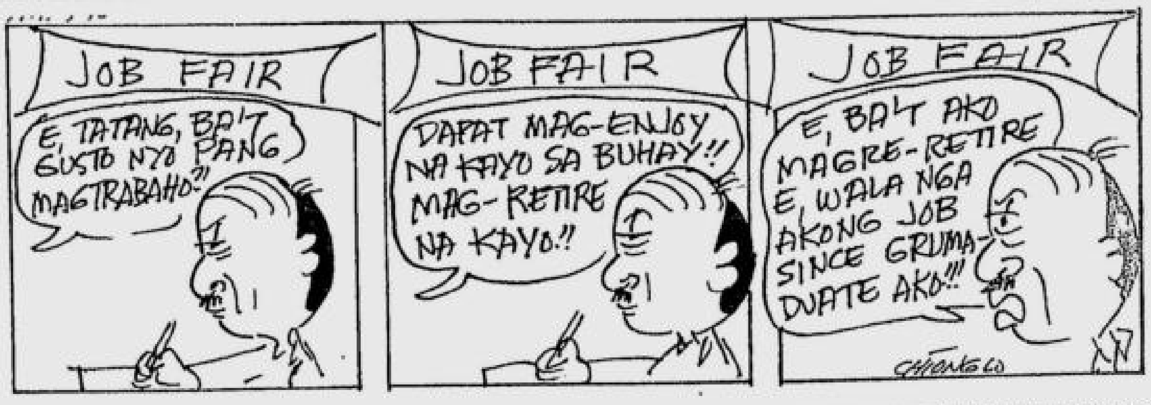
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


Katrina Sinta GUNI-GUNING
...AT DOON NA NGA NAGSIMULA. UNTI-UNTI NANG HINANGAAN AT NAGING INSPIRASYON NG MARAMING MAMBABASA SI KATRINA...
TAK TAK TAK TAKATAKATAK
ooh... AT PARATI NILANG TANONG, "SINO NGA BA SIYA?". MARAMI RING HAKA-HAKA...
MULTO RAW SYANG SUMASAPI SA MGA WRITER SA UNIVERSITY DYARYO EH...
HRG! WEIRD!
ARAW-ARAW PA RIN AKO DUMADAAN SA OPIS NILA KAHIT PARATI NILANG SINASABING WALA SIYA D'UN...
UNIVERSITY DYARYO
HINDI AKO SUMUKO. AT YUN NA NGA... ISANG HAPON, NAKAKITA AKO NG PARANG APPARITION SA ROOFTOP. SI KATRINA?...
ITUTULOY!...

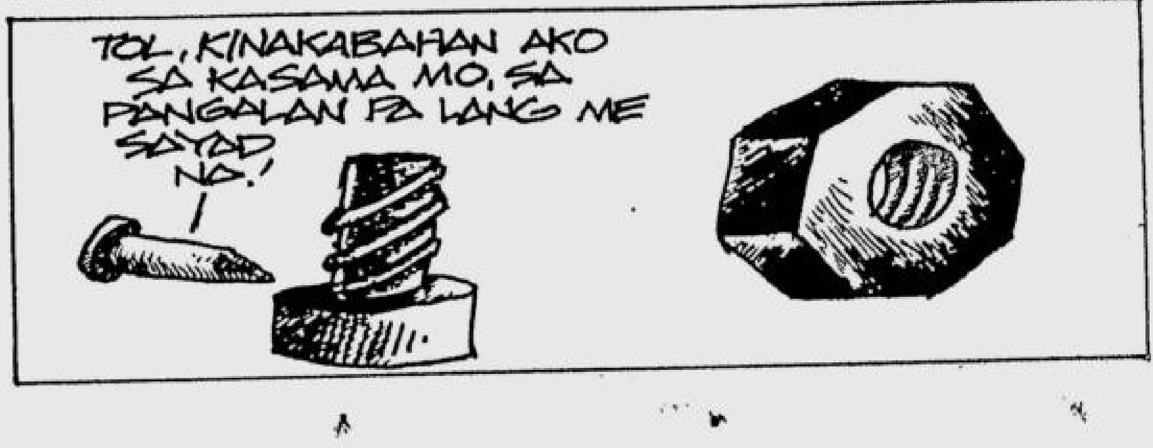
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JOB FAIR
E, TATANG, BA'T GUSTO NYO PANG MAGTRABAHO?!
JOB FAIR
DAPAT MAG-ENJOY NA KAYO SA BUHAY!! MAG-RETIRE NA KAYO!!
JOB FAIR
E, BA'T AKO MAGRE-RETIRE E, WALA NGA AKONG JOB SINCE GRUMADUATE AKO!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


TOL, KINAKABAHAN AKO SA KASAMA MO, SA PANGALAN PA LANG ME SAYAD NA!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You need to be active! You're energetic and bold, and you have a positive frame of mind. Your intuition is excellent. You know how to teach and demonstrate things. Between ages 20 and 50, you're ready to explore the world. (You're keen to learn.) In later years, you want a comfortable home and cozy domestic world. Big changes are afoot this year.

Birthdate of: Paul "Bono" Hewson, musician; Fred Astaire, actor/ dancer; Amanda Borden, Olympic gymnast.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Whatever others say today could be suspect. Take everything with a grain of salt. (Depending on your taste, you might also like a little ketchup on the side.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Conversations with authority figures, parents, teachers and the police are extremely confusing today. You're not sure what others expect from you. Don't act until you know.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Disregard feelings of doubt and personal anxiety today. People might do or say things that confirm your worst fears about yourself. It's not true! It's just a funny thing happening today.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Discussions with friends about how to share something or how to take responsibility for someone else could be muddled. Don't agree to anything until you know what's happening.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): If you feel that bosses, parents and authority figures misunderstand what you're saying (or vice versa), you're right. Postpone important discussions until later in the week.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You might fall for an unusual philosophy. It's easy to be seduced by fast talk about spiritual, religious or political ideas. Stay alert.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): If you have to divide shared property or agree how to spend an allotted amount of money, make this decision another day. Today things are confusing—even deceitful!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): People are either confused or afraid to tell the truth today. Don't expect too much from others, especially partners and close friends.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might feel sorry for a coworker today. You want to help if you can. Make sure you have the correct facts. (It's easy for people to fool others today.)

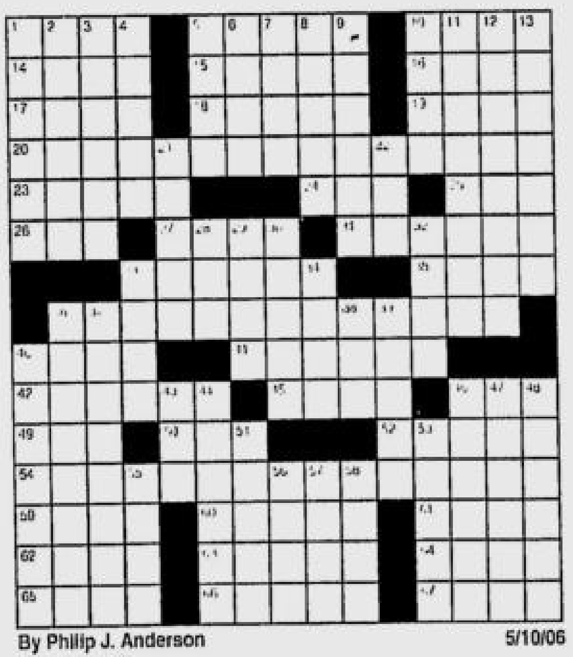
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): If you think something seems too good to be true, it is. This is the classic day to kid yourself about something. (This goes for gambling.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Avoid important decisions based on real estate or family matters today. There's just too much confusion present, and you don't have all the facts.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a good day for daydreaming and imaginative ideas. It's a poor day for grounded decisions. Be careful. Someone could deceive you or fool you about something.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Lead actor
5 Metal fastener
10 Nickel or dime
14 Abate
15 Walled city near Madrid
16 "The King and I" heroine
17 Young lice
18 Unvoiced
19 G-men
20 Upped cash
23 Solid ground
24 Wallach of "The Magnificent Seven"
25 Dockworkers' org.
26 Those elected
27 Links grp.
31 Show hosts
33 Good looks
35 Complexion woe
36 Upped cash
40 Cupbearer of the gods
41 Conger catchers
42 Code of silence
45 Unit of loudness
46 Mauna __ volcano
49 Danson of "Becker"
50 Attorney's org.
52 Grumpy characters
54 Upped cash
59 SSS designation
60 City on the Mohawk
61 Center
62 Bell sound
63 Leslie of "Lili"
64 Bond's alma mater
65 Sp. maiden
66 Prevailing tide
67 Extravagant speech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By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

5/10/06

DOWN
1 Karate instructor
2 Formosa, today
3 Daisylike flowers
4 Return to, defaults
5 Grade
6 Karamazov brother
7 Don Johnson TV series, "Miami __"
8 Slur over
9 Tell secrets
10 Alfresco hangout
11 Type of swimsuit
12 Habitually lazy
13 Ile of tennis
21 Hitchhike
22 That man
28 RSVP word
29 Elation
30 Yellow-fever mosquito
32 Hacks
33 Litigant
34 Caen's neighbor
36 Bearing
37 Well-behaved
38 Coop biddy
39 Upright
40 Souped-up vehicles
43 __ kwon do
44 Spirit away
46 Teton Sioux
47 Satellite of Uranus
48 Concurrence
51 Perfume oil
53 Daytona entry
55 Heroic narrative
56 Put on the payroll
57 MBA course
58 Dune material

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

B	R	A	Y	■	A	C	E	D	■	D	I	K	E	S
L	I	N	E	■	K	A	L	E	■	O	G	I	V	E
O	A	T	S	■	I	D	E	S	■	C	O	L	I	N
C	L	I	M	A	T	E	C	O	N	T	R	O	L	S
■	■	■	A	R	A	N	■	T	A	R	■	S	S	F
B	A	N	N	S	■	C	H	O	P	I	N	■	■	■
A	L	E	■	■	P	E	A	■	E	N	R	A	G	E
L	O	W	P	R	E	S	S	U	R	E	A	R	E	A
M	E	T	E	O	R	■	A	N	Y	■	■	G	A	S
■	■	■	P	O	I	N	T	S	■	A	B	O	R	T
E	R	A	■	T	S	E	■	A	A	R	L	■	■	■
W	I	N	D	C	H	I	L	L	F	A	C	T	O	R
E	G	G	A	R	■	M	U	T	I	■	A	R	T	Y
R	H	I	N	O	■	A	L	E	R	■	L	I	T	E
S	T	E	E	P	■	N	U	D	E	■	M	O	O	S

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5/10/06

ENTERTAINMENT

NANCY Castiglione ROGER MARGALLO

Nancy, are you listening?

RUSHES

JOHN PRATS TOLD THE press that he had no time for love and that he'd rather focus on his career.

"After coming out of the 'Pinoy Big Brother' house, I realized I should take my work seriously. Not everyone is given a second chance," John says.

This must be why rumored girlfriend Nancy Castiglione has not been seeing much of John lately.

False alarm

ALTHOUGH Meryll Soriano looks very much in love with new boyfriend Bernard Palanca, she insists the rumor that she's infanticipating is false.

"I just gained weight," she asserts.

How can she be pregnant when she is set to portray a female boxer in the Cinemalaya entry "In Da Red Corner"?

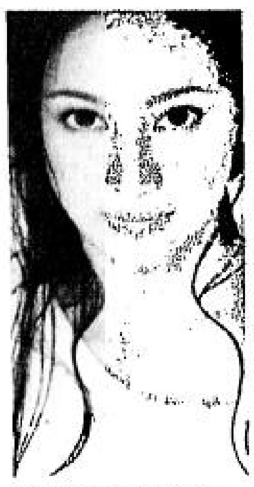
"She's even willing to shave her head for the role," says Robbie Tan, chair of Cinemalaya's monitoring committee.

Zaturnnah auditions

LAST Sunday, director Mark Meily conducted auditions for the film version of Carlo Vergara's "Ang Kagila-Gilalas na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Zsazsa Zaturnnah."

The tryouts were for Femina, the *contravida*, and Dodong, the love interest.

Meily says he's looking for a Femina who's "tall and stylish, like a supermodel."



RUFA Mae Quinto

AI-AI de las Alas

Ogie Alcasid landed the lead role of Ada, a gay beautician who turns into superheroine Zsazsa or Rufa Mae Quinto.

Shooting starts mid-June, says Meily.

Motivation

AI-AI de las Alas told the press that her main motivation in her crying scenes in the new soap "Bituing Walang Ningning" was her new home—specifically, its monthly amortization.

The girl works hard for a living... and board and lodging.

Rooting for Aldred

ALDRED Gatchalian

ALDRED Gatchalian, the teener who chose to "exit voluntarily" on "Pinoy Big Brother," won a number of fans after his first guest appearance on "The Buzz"—including host Boy Abunda.

The manager-host admitted on the show that he was disappointed when Aldred quit two weeks ago. He could've won the competition, Boy sighed.

What of waste of dimples!

New girl in the house

LAST Sunday, a new housemate was introduced to replace ousted housemate Bam Romana.

Dubbed the "Amazing Amerasian of Olongapo," Brenda Fox joined the "young and the restless" teeners in Kuya's house.

Before signing up with PBB, Brenda topped the Miss Zambales Tourism contest.

WHICH WOMAN COMPLETES THE IMPOSSIBLE MISSION?
TOM CRUISE
M:i:III
MICHELLE MONAGHAN
MAGGIE Q
KERI RUSSELL
MissionImpossible.com
2ND BLOCKBUSTER WEEK!
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STEVE CARELL
WILLIAM SHATNER
WANDA SYKES
NICK NOLTE
OVER THE HEDGE
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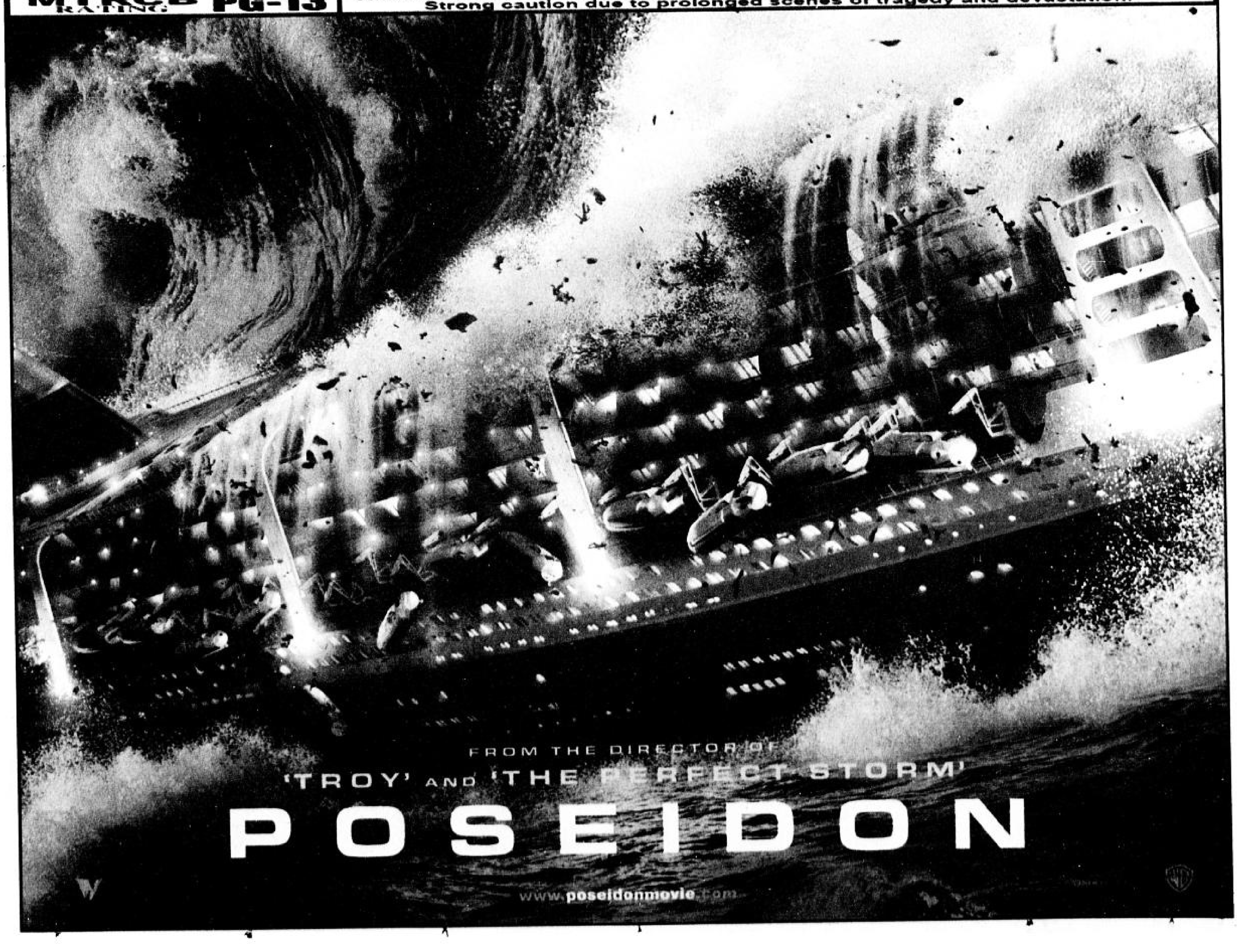
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
'TROY' AND 'THE PERFECT STORM'
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WHAT'S INSIDE
Absent-minded CEO /B3
Treasury rejects all bids for 4-year T-bonds /B2

Website: www.inq7money.net
BUSINESS
Editor Raul O. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma
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DOF rejects bid to cut corporate tax rate

Changes in VAT law seen to compromise gov't fiscal targets

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE HAS RULED AGAINST A proposal from the business community to immediately bring down the corporate income tax rate to its original level of 32 percent, as it explains to business owners that the high tax rate is a temporary measure.

The corporate income tax rate was increased to 35 percent last November. The measure was one of the minor provisions of the Reformed VAT Law, which basically expanded the coverage of the value-added tax and raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent.

According to a ranking finance official, the DOF is not inclined to amend the VAT law because proceeds of the tax measure are already incorporated in the government's fiscal program. Any changes to the VAT law will compromise the government's fiscal targets.

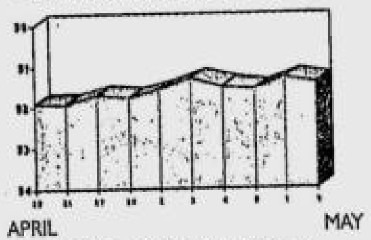
The official added that it would require legislation to bring down the corporate income tax rate to 32 percent, and subject the entire VAT law to another round of scrutiny by Congress.

The VAT law, which had a tough time

DOJ/ B5

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



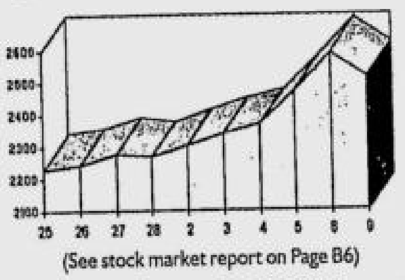
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P51.45 = $1
As of 5 p.m., May 9, 2006

Y111.90 = $1
As of 5 p.m., May 9, 2006

GOLD: $678.40-678.90
per ounce Hong Kong, May 9, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B6)

Stocks close 2.97% lower

SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY closed 2.97 percent lower, falling sharply as investors took profits on the recent rally which had taken the market to near seven-year highs, dealers said.

They said losses in heavyweight Philippine Long Distance Telephone also weighed on sentiment. *(See story below)*

Profit-taking is expected to continue in the coming sessions as most stocks are still expensive after recent sharp gains.

The composite index fell 76.94 points to 2,512.23, the day's low, after touching a high of 2,590.50.

It had gained 14 percent during a five-day rally.

Volume was 2.13 billion shares worth P2.85 billion.

The all-shares index ended down 28.64 points to 1,546.56. Losers led gainers 62 to 46, with 46 stocks unchanged.

The peso traded at 51.38 to the dollar by midday.

STOCKS/ B6

PLDT sweetens dividends as Q1 net slips

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST TELECOMMUNICATIONS group yesterday decided to cheer up investors by hiking their dividend payments after it reported muted earnings growth in the first quarter.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) earned P8.6 billion in the first quarter, representing a 7-percent decline compared to the P9.2 billion in the same period last year.

Speaking to reporters during a briefing, PLDT president and CEO Napoleon L. Nazareno attributed the decline to additional depreciation expenses and lower gains due to foreign exchange rate fluctuations.

Excluding forex gains, however, PLDT's first quarter income actually grew to P7.6 billion, representing a 16-percent increase over the P6.5 billion in core earnings reported in the first quarter of 2005.

To offset the disappointing performance, company officials are raising the dividend payments to 60 percent of this year's core earnings, from the 50 percent of the previous year.

"Part of our philosophy is to balance what we pay our creditors with what we pay our shareholders," PLDT chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan told reporters during a briefing.

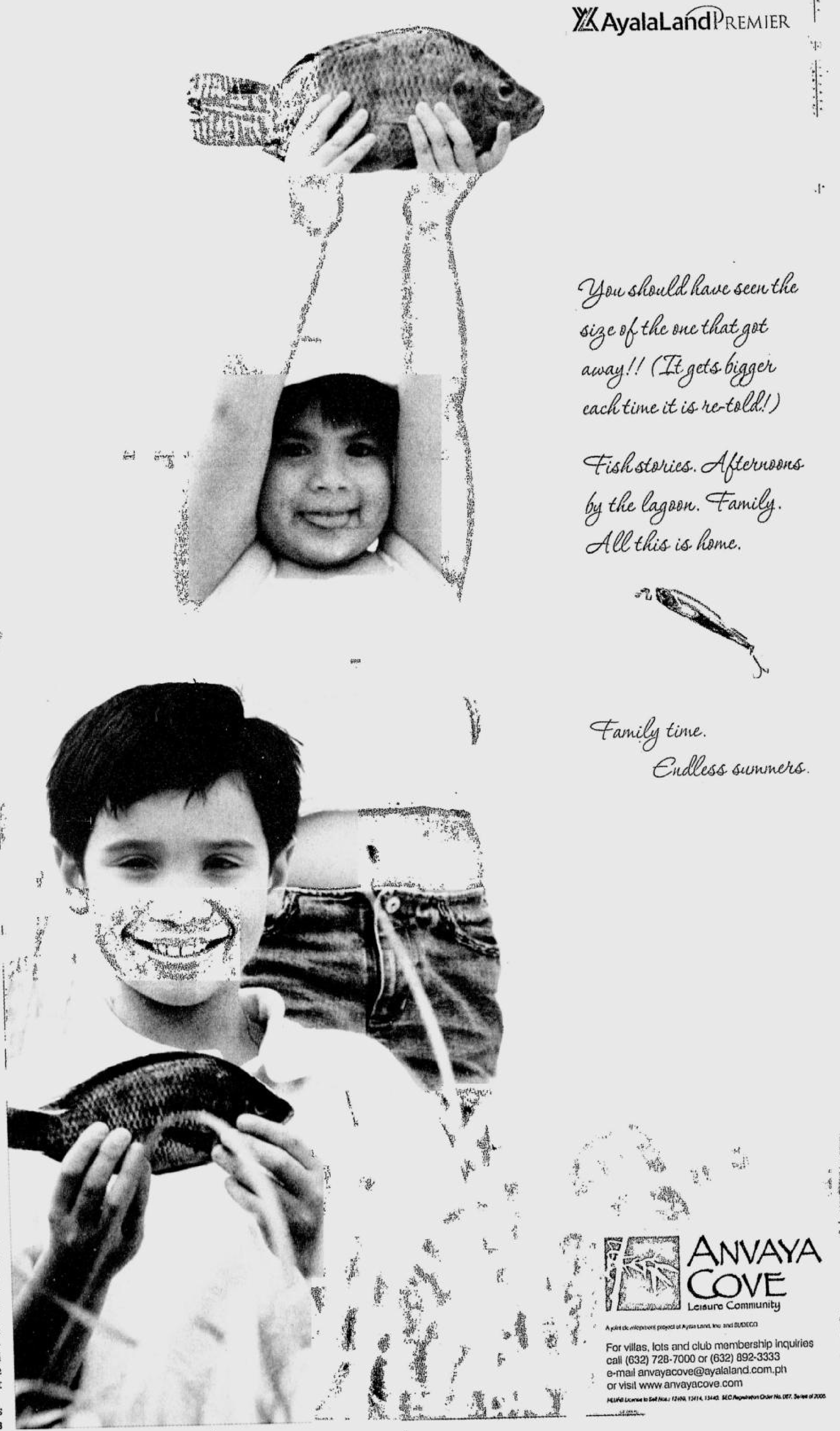
The higher payout means that the company will have a 50-50 mix of resources being allocated to creditors and shareholders as compared with the previous years, when as much as 80 percent were paid out to creditors.

"That will be the trend for the future," Pangilinan said, in an apparent effort to keep the company's investors happy amid a resurgence in the performance of its main rival, Globe Telecom Inc.

But the PLDT chief turned sober when he gave an assessment for the company's performance for the rest of the year. Pangilinan said that PLDT this year would not likely duplicate its record-breaking financial performance last year.

Pangilinan predicted that the company's

PLDT/ B3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DOE postpones auction of wind power development deals

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY has shelved the second wind power contracting round until later in the year as the agency continued evaluating more sites to be offered to investors for development.

Mario Marasigan, director of the department's energy utilization and management bureau, said that out of the 17 sites earlier evaluated and lined up for bidding, only a few remained.

"Some have extremely low potential, making them unattractive to investors. Others are located in private lands, while some already have interested parties so we'll no longer include those in the contracting round," he told reporters.

He said the DOE would have to expand the project by evaluating more potential sites.

The contracting round, originally scheduled for end-March, would have to wait until the DOE gets a "large enough number" of potential sites to offer for development.

"We have already validated around 30 sites, but we still have to evaluate them. All of these are still free. There's no definite number on how many investors can join. We still have to finish our assessment," he said.

Nine local and foreign firms and consortia have earlier expressed interest in developing some of the 17 new wind sites that the DOE had included in its 2nd Wind Power Contracting Round.

These include First Gen Renewables Inc. for sites in Bago City and Cauayan in Negros Occidental, Benguet Corp. for those in Allen-Lavesares and Calbayog City in Northern Samar, and Nation Petroleum Corp. for those in Bani and Bolinao in Pangasinan and San Andres in Quezon.

The other interested parties were Philippine National Oil Co. Energy Development Corp. for the Bantay, Ilocos Sur site, Trans-Asia Renewable Energy Corp. for the Mercedes, Camarines Norte wind area, and Coastal Power Development Corp. for the Daet, Camarines Norte site.

A consortium composed of Transnational Diversified Corp., Asia One Power Corp. and Cammon Windsolar Energy Inc. is eyeing two wind sites: Carmen and Oslob, both in Cebu.

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(Head Office and Branches)
As of March 31, 2006

		AMOUNT
ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Items	P	971,142
Due from Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas		973,735
Due from Other Banks		2,642,595
Investments in bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		55,942,045
Loans, Discounts & Advances (Net)		9,476,845
Bank Premises, Furnitures, Fixtures & Equipments (Net)		1,839,251
Other Assets (Net):		
Others		518,723
TOTAL ASSETS	P	72,364,336
LIABILITIES		
Savings Deposits		1,281,364
Time Deposits		1,943,688
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits		504,555
Other Liabilities		1,324,393
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P	5,054,000
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		
Capital Stock	P	50,000,000
Surplus		17,310,336
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	67,310,336
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	72,364,336

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Chairman

Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Jr.
Director

Alfredo M. Yao
Director

PRINCIPAL OFFICER

Alex A. Pimentel
President

Other Information:	
1. Deposits of:	
a. Banks	2,642,595
2. Compliance with Magna Carta Law:	
Prescribed	
Ratio of Compliance / Actual Compliance	6 % for Small Enterprises / 36.20%
3. General provision for loan losses	86,811
4. Specific provision for loan losses	5,950,820
5. Return on equity (ROE)	0.28%
6. Amount of DOSRI loans/advances	

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MAKATI CITY) S.S.

I / WE, Alex A. Pimentel and Benjamin P. Castillo of the above-mentioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above statement of condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

(Sgd.) ALEX A. PIMENTEL
President

(Sgd.) BENJAMIN P. CASTILLO
Chairman

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 4th day of May, 2006, affiant exhibiting to me his/her/their Community Tax No.8784849 issued at Cebu on January 19, 2006 and Community Tax No. 12099808 issued at Manila on January 2, 2006.

Doc. No. 334
Page No. 69
Book No. VI
Series of 2006

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Treasury rejects all bids for 4-year T-bonds

Market misinterpreted BSP chief statement–Cruz

By Michelle V. Remo

CRUZ

THE GOVERNMENT REJECTED ALL bids for the 4-year Treasury bond in an auction yesterday.

The move, according to officials, was aimed at preventing the market from pushing interest rates up. It also sends the signal that the government was not desperate for cash, they said.

With the rejection of the bids, the rate for the 4-year bond remained at its previous month's level of 6.5 percent.

The rate could have gone up by 63.6 points to 7.136 percent had the Bureau of the Treasury accepted the offers.

Tenders during yesterday's auction reached P5.315 billion, higher than the government's debt offering of P3.5 billion.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the bids were "throw-away," as they reflected risk premiums that were absurdly high.

"We fully rejected the bids on account of market incoherence and apparent confusion. On one hand, investors are saying their sentiment remains positive because of the good fiscal position of the government but, on the other hand, they are actually bidding up the rate," Cruz said in a briefing after the auction.

He said the market misinterpreted the statement of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas about the need to push interest rates a little higher.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. was quoted in news reports as saying that interest rates were already a little too low and should be increased a bit to encourage investments.

But Cruz said Tetangco was referring to the 91-day Treasury bill rate and not government bonds.

Cruz admitted that the 91-day T-bill rate had fallen too low and that the Bureau of the Treasury was willing to accept bids for higher rates.

The latest 91-day T-bill rate stood at 4.768 percent, much lower than the inflation rate, which settled at 7.1 percent last April. This means the gains from investing in T-bills would only be gobbled up by the increase in consumer prices.

The treasurer explained that since the inflation rate was seen falling in the coming years, the current yields on T-bonds (government debt instruments with maturity of more than one year) were just appropriate.

Cruz said the Bureau of the Treasury had the capability to reject bids because the government's cash position remained healthy. He said his office could in fact decide to further cut the volume of T-bill and T-bond offerings in the third quarter if the market would push for unreasonably high rates.

Globe readies $130-M loan for expansion

By Daxim L. Lucas

GLOBE TELECOM INC., THE COUNtry's second largest telecommunications group, may borrow as much as $130 million from creditors in the near term to finance its foray into third-generation (3G) network services.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Globe president and CEO Gerardo C. Ablaza Jr. said the amount may be drawn in US dollars or in its peso equivalent, depending on which currency would be more advantageous for the firm.

The announcement of a new borrowing plan comes after the company revealed a strong performance in the first quarter of 2006, which was widely praised by industry analysts and cheered by its investors.

The performance emboldened the company to push ahead with its expansion plan into the still untried 3G market.

Ablaza said that between $50 million and $70 million of the planned borrowing will be used exclusively for the expansion of its 3G network, including the setting up of additional base stations nationwide.

At present, Globe has 150 base stations for 3G services. It hopes to raise this number to 1,000 under the expansion plan to make 3G services accessible nationwide.

The Globe chief said that the company has already asked at least three banking groups to submit bids for the proposed borrowing.

This includes BPI Capital Corp.—a subsidiary of Ayala-owned Bank of the Philippine Islands—and the local unit of German banking giant Deutsche Bank AG, as well as a third unidentified financial institution.

"The loan will likely be a combination of dollars and pesos, but we would like to maximize the peso component," Ablaza said, explaining that the interest rate differential between US dollar- and peso-denominated loans have been narrowing in recent months.

US interest rates have been rising slowly since last year due to rising inflation in the world's largest economy. In contrast, interest rates on local borrowings have been going down after the government instituted a recovery plan to stave off a fiscal crisis.

In addition, the fiscal recovery plan also boosted the value of the peso against the US dollar, making it more attractive for companies to borrow locally rather than abroad.

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[redacted]

Banks told to prepare for tougher US stance vs money laundering

By Doris C. Dumlao

A GLOBAL ANTI-MONEY LAUNdering expert has urged Philippine banks to prepare for tougher offshore regulations, particularly in the United States, even after the country had been stricken off the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)'s list of "uncooperative" countries.

Rowan Bosworth-Davies—one of the foreign consultants earlier hired by the Asian Development Bank to help the Philippines free itself from the FATF blacklist and now a director for fraud and anti-money laundering solutions of US-based SAS International—said local banks must prioritize the establishment of an effective electronic money laundering transaction monitoring platform as required by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The BSP earlier extended by 18 months the deadline for compliance with this requirement.

"While I could see the potential for complacency, I hope the banks will look at this (extension) as an opportunity rather than a freedom time not to do anything," Bosworth-Davies said in an interview with the INQUIRER.

The visiting anti-money laundering expert said the US, in view of its widening current account deficits, was increasingly becoming more rigorous on banking regulations particularly because the world's biggest economy was now having more difficult time luring back the huge amount of dollars flowing to Asia.

"I don't think the real threat is coming from Philippine regulators. If there's going to be a threat at all, it will be from the Americans. They will exert pressure on foreign banks by denying them the ability to clear dollars through the correspondent clearing system," he said.

With over $10 billion coming in from eight million overseas Filipino workers, the remittance system is a big business in the case of the Philippine banking system.

He said banks must take advantage of the additional time given by the BSP to beef up anti-money laundering systems and make sure they were working properly.

SAS, one of the world's leading software company based in North Carolina, USA, recently signed a contract to provide anti-money laundering solutions to Philippine Veterans Bank.

Bosworth-Davies has had over 25 years of practical and theoretical experience on the investigation and prosecution of fraud and white-collar crime, once a Fraud Squad detective at New Scotland Yard and likewise ran the investigations division of one of UK's financial self-regulating organizations.

He said the biggest challenge faced by the country after its delisting from the FATF was the implementation by banks of a more effective 'know-your-customer (KYC)' rule which was the cornerstone of anti-money laundering prevention.

Absent-minded CEO

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

THE ALLEGATION THAT MIKE ARROYO'S uncle Manuel Nieto Jr., 90, has Alzheimer's disease gained traction after Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile obtained video proof that the PHC president-CEO was clueless about having signed a petition to stop the PHC annual stockholders meeting.

Nieto was again absent in yesterday's continuation of the special Philcomsat Holdings meeting, despite having allegedly signed another petition to the Securities and Exchange Commission asking for its continuance.

In the same breath, Nieto was listed as the petitioner seeking the Court of Appeals to stop the SEC and his own PHC from holding the annual stockholders' meeting.

The special stockholders' meeting, in the meantime, was allowed by the SEC to proceed to enable the warring shareholders to extend the PHC corporate by-laws, whose registration was due to expire yesterday.

As the stormy meeting was being continued from last week's equally stormy meeting, unidentified security personnel were cleaning up the PHC headquarters on the 10th floor of Telecoms Plaza building of financial and legal documents.

Nieto himself was whisked away by his security people, as Ponce Enrile once again tried to send a family friend to fetch Nieto from his residence yesterday morning.

In the video recording taken earlier, Nieto said he wanted to have breakfast with Ponce Enrile, one of the founding shareholders of the Philcomsat Group, whom he had not seen for some time.

The senator has gone on record to say that Nieto had long been stricken by the degenerative disease and, therefore, was unaware of the millions in disbursements being made on his behalf by his nephew, PHC chair Benito "Bomboy" Araneta, and other Malacañang nominees in the PHC board led by Free Press publisher Enrique "Henry" Locsin and his cousin Roberto Abad.

According to SEC sources, Nieto never personally appeared before SEC Chair Fe Barin or any of the SEC officials to personally attest and swear to his numerous pleadings.

All the Nieto pleadings were prepared and signed on his behalf by a law firm, whose managing partner had been suspended by the Supreme Court for having preyed on another octogenarian businessman stricken with the same memory-loss disease.

Aside from Nieto, Araneta and corporate secretary Roberto San Jose were also absent from yesterday's meeting, leaving the proceedings to be conducted by a vice president, Philip Brodett.

As in last week's meeting, Brodett also dodged questions as to how much of PHC's original P1.2-billion cash has been left, and in which depository banks, other than the troubled Bankwise, has it been deposited.

Despite losing money last year, PHC even increased the "housing" loans extended to the Malacañang nominees to P10 million.

And despite himself already living in Makati Tuscany, the Ayala Avenue condominium whose long-time residents included taipan Henry Sy, Locsin was among the first to avail themselves of the sub-market facility, but not after acquiring himself a Jaguar luxury saloon.

The Jaguar acquisition, incidentally, is a classic in accounting and bookkeeping. But that, as they say, is another story.

Chinatrust fires auditor

CHINATRUST said it had fired its external auditor, Laya Mananghaya, for incompetence.

In a strongly worded disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, the Taiwanese bank said the audit firm, which was once headed by retired Central Bank Gov. Jaime Laya, had "limited exposure in the banking industry" and had "insufficient grasp of the new and evolving standards in financial reporting."

Sought for comment, Laya said he had retired from the audit firm two years ago and had in fact asked that his name be removed from the partnership.

Money-go-round

- THE MAJOR supermarkets in Makati have run out of Splenda, the sucralose artificial sweetener whose worldwide demand is still outstripping supply.
- Not only does former Rep. Aniceto Saludo Jr. have problems with American Express Bank, the Philippine National Bank has also been trying to collect, without much success, about P10 million in back office rentals from the Saludo law firm.

Heard through the grapevine

THE LAWYER of the other "drunken" buyer of Equitable PCIBank, Rolando Mario Villonco, left yesterday for the United States, after failing to submit a binding buy-out offer from his undisclosed principal in time for the May 8 GSIS deadline.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

PLDT sweetens …

From page B1

core earnings will rise to "at least P31 billion" by the end of 2006, representing a P2-billion increase over last year's adjusted core earnings of P29 billion.

He pointed out, however, that forex gains—over which the company has no control—will not match last year's P4.9 billion which they owed to the sharp appreciation of the peso against the US dollar.

"For us to earn that same amount, the peso will have to rise to P48:$1 which is unlikely at this point," Pangilinan said.

Instead, the company's forex gains will likely be capped at the present P1.6 billion. This means that the company's reported net income will likely be lower than last year's, Pangilinan said.

Meanwhile, PLDT subsidiary Pilipino Telephone Corp. announced its intention to prepay $177 million in loans, representing 43 percent of its total outstanding debt.

According to Pangilinan, it is now possible to prepay the loans because of the group's strong cash position, with consolidated free cash flow standing at P6.4 billion at the end of last quarter.

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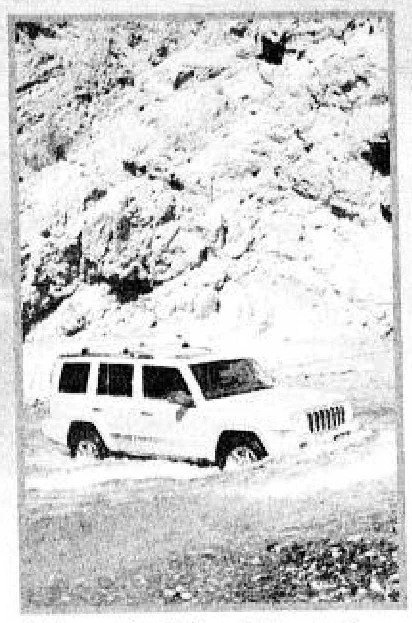
A Jeep for first and third world travel



IT doesn't feel like a fish out of water.

...AS it is in the rough and tumble world of SUVs.

By Tessa R. Salazar

Conclusion

IN LOCAL PARLANCE, HOW would one call the "beastly" image of the Jeep Commander? *Matibay* (durable), *machong-macho* (manly), *mayabang* (boastful), or *matigas* (tough), perhaps? Whatever one may call it wherever, the makers of the Jeep Commander designed this vehicle beyond the reach of the "cute" SUV pretenders proliferating in the market.

An SUV this serious-looking surely must be for a select few. Its tough-as-nails look only the military can love is surprisingly a joy to drive and ride in, even during those shaky moments in the rugged Omani trails.

Perhaps, for an SUV maker that has been making its mark for the past 65 years, conformity comes optional. The Jeep family, after all, has been much about that all-American bad boy image of the 4x4 world.

Choice of the name

The choice of the name "Commander" can even be taken literally. Want to "feel like a general," be in control of the situation and do some serious offroading during weekends without leaving the comforts and perks of your rocking chair? Here's the Commander for you.

And because it comes with theater styling seven seats, the general can bring six of his top lieutenants with him to cover the battlefield. It's just as comfortable backing out of a garage in a suburban US home as it is negotiating the unpredictable trails of an Asian wilderness.

That means, the Commander can fit into the Philippine setting as well as any other imported vehicle that has colonized our shores. Full-service support will come from aggressive CATS Motors on Edsa, Greenhills.

Product offensive

CATS Motors, the Philippine distributor of Mercedes-Benz, DaimlerChrysler and Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep vehicles, promised that it would be vigilant in its drive to strengthen its Jeep product offensive in the country. Apart from its state-of-the-art showroom and facilities on Edsa, it also has a Mercedes-Benz showroom at the Fort Bonifacio Global City. Its Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep vehicles are backed by three-year warranties.

The Jeep Commander 4.7L V8 is priced competitively at P2.850 million, placing it in the same league as these leading luxury SUVs—Expedition Eddie Bauer (4x4 A/T) at P2.999 million, Mitsubishi Pajero 4x4 with new bulkier body at P2.7 million, Toyota Prado (4x4 automatic) P2.862 million, manual) P2.762 million; Chevy Trailblazer (4x4 AT 4.2-L) P2.299 million, (4x2 AT) P2.099 million; Tahoe (4x2 AT 4.8L V8) P2.525 million; Suburban (4x2 AT 5.3L V8) P3.095 million; and Nissan Patrol 4x4 (AT diesel) P2.408 million, (AT gas) P2.597 million.

Classic styling

While some observers may call its styling "beastly," its makers prefer to call it "classic." The Commander's styling includes an upright windscreen, backlight and rear end, as well as its more vertical body sides and side glass.

For the first time in a Jeep, there are three rows of seats. Each row is slightly higher than the one in front, thus the term "theater styling" and improving the optimal all-round view for every passenger. The second row seats are mounted 117.3 mm (4.62 in.) higher than the front row, and the third row seats are 120.45 mm (4.75 inches) higher than the second row. The view of the driver on the rear windshield, however, becomes too small for this writer's point of view.

Noticeable is the stepped roof which provides more headroom for second and third row occupants. Also evident is the designers' thoughtfulness for children riding the vehicles with front mounted sunroof and two skylights complete with shades over the second row seats. It has available heating, ventilation and air-conditioning in the third row.

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

DUE TO SPACE LIMITATION, ANDRE Palma's column will appear next week.

Vintage cars hit the road

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

SINCE AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION Philippines is observing its 75th anniversary this year, what better way to kick off the week-long celebration than with a vintage car parade?

And since AAP, which was organized in 1931 as the Philippine Motor Association, had its first office in the Manila Hotel, what better place to flag off the parade than in front of the most historical five-star hotel in Manila?

So if you were in Port Area last Sunday morning, you might have caught a glimpse of lovingly restored vintage cars streaming out of the Manila Hotel's parking lot, followed by not-so-vintage members of car clubs such as the Miata Club, the Mini Car (pre-BMW Mini Cooper) Club, Mercedes-Benz Club, Volkswagen Car Club and the British Roadster Group.

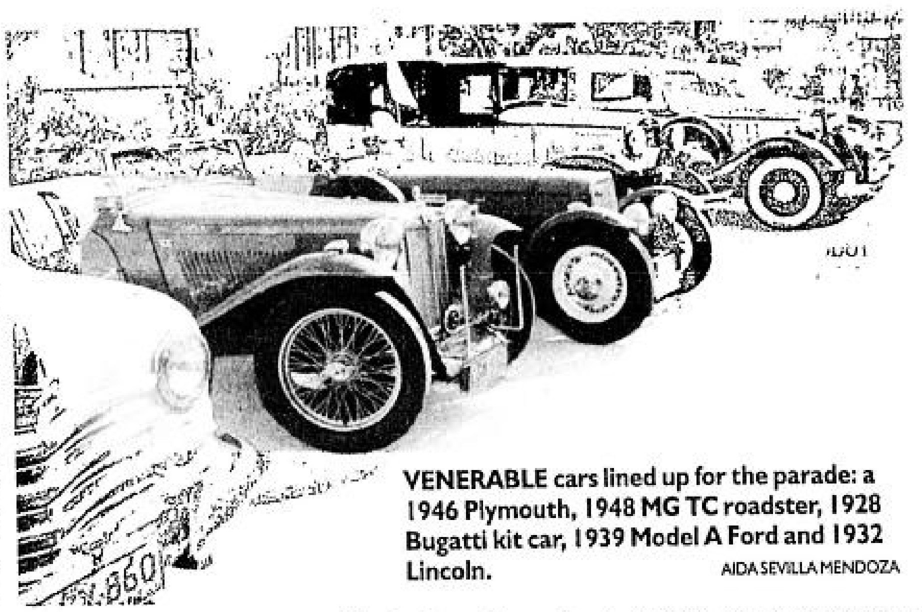
Members of the Vintage Car Club of the Philippines, which was founded by AAP director Ronald D. Reidenbach and is now led by Neneng Gorospe, proudly posted their club banner on their vehicles as did members of the Classic Car Club on theirs. The enthusiasm and camaraderie among the various car club members filled the air in the Roma Salon as they snacked on cookies and coffee offered by the hotel management courtesy of Manila Hotel president Joey Lina.

After a briefing program, it was outdoors for the ceremonial flag-off by AAP veep Johnny Angeles. The parade route covered Roxas Boulevard, Buendia, Ayala Avenue and Makati Avenue, ending up at the Department of Tourism grounds on T.M. Kalaw Avenue for lunch and the awarding ceremony.

Car No. 1, an Irish blue 1948 MG TC roadster owned and driven by Ben Silvestre, won the Best Classic Car trophy awarded by Gina de Castro, daughter-in-law of the late Cresenciano C. de Castro, an architect who owned one of the largest vintage and classic car collections in the country.

The Oldest Car Award went to Romy Lopeña for his 1928 Model A Ford which is recognized by those in the know as the "Oldest Running Car" in the Philippines.

Jimmy Barleta, owner and driver of a bright red 1932 Studebaker topdown roadster, won the Most Attractive Display trophy. Barleta told me that he spent P2 million to restore his Studebaker and that its market value in the United States is now $100,000 but he's not selling.



VENERABLE cars lined up for the parade: a 1946 Plymouth, 1948 MG TC roadster, 1928 Bugatti kit car, 1939 Model A Ford and 1932 Lincoln. AIDA SEVILLA MENDOZA

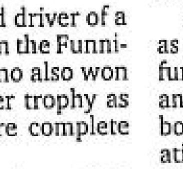
Virgilio Alano, owner and driver of a red 1928 Bugatti kit car, won the Funniest Looking Car trophy. Alano also won the Funniest Looking Driver trophy as he was clad in 1920s attire complete with cap and spats.

The Best Presentation (most complete packaging) trophy went to Mr. and Mrs. Peter Smith of the British Roadster Group for their 1941 all-original Willys MacArthur type US Army Jeep. Smith said that his '41 Jeep was "dressed for normal use" not for a parade.

Five other trophies were presented as minor awards, some in the spirit of fun such as an "AAP Wild West Award" and a special award for the entry that bore the oldest Philippine Motor Association insignia. The AAP vintage and car clubs parade was sponsored by Sustagen Premium with Petron, the Manila Hotel and the Department of Tourism.

Gov't is our No. 1 partner, Komura says

FULL TANK



Al Mendoza

I'LL LET YOU IN ON ONE SECRET.

Do you know that Thailand gives so much subsidy and tariff incentives to its motoring industry that's why Thailand is No. 1 in the business in the entire Asean region?

Not that Thailand has better vehicle engineers than us. No, the massive support of the Thai government has given that country's automotive business the impetus to move miles ahead of its competitors in Southeast Asia.

Our engineers are among the world's best. That's why many of them are found anywhere in the four corners of the globe.

* * *

Yoshifumi Komura, the energetic president and CEO of Isuzu Philippines Corp., acknowledges the key role a government plays in the automotive world.

"Without the support of government, the vehicle business can't prosper," Komura said. "And, for that matter, any business needs the government in order to succeed."

I had lunch with Komura-san a while back and I found him to be a deep thinker and a firm believer of the Filipino's capability to score big when challenged to perform.

"With so much help from these staff of mine, Isuzu continues to be competitive," Komura said, referring to Art Balmadrid, Timmy Naval and Ronald "Isuzu Joe" Baladad who were with us during the brain-picking lunch. "They work really hard to attain the corporate objectives of IPC."

* * *

Komura-san said he envied Thailand "because Thailand gives top priority to its automotive business."

Said Komura: "For many years now, the automotive business in Thailand has been a recipient of tax incentives, and even subsidy, that's why the vehicle business there has always been very healthy."

Thailand manufactures the best-selling Isuzu Alterra, known in Bangkok as MU-7. The Alterra, in case you still don't know, has given the Toyota Fortuner a strong challenge last year. At one point, the sales of Alterra reached unbelievable heights especially when the queue for the Fortuner breached the two-month barrier.

But, of course, Isuzu's best-seller in Thailand has always been the D'Max. In fact, because of D'Max, Isuzu has become Thailand's No. 1 pickup business for 23 straight years now. Due to that astonishing distinction, Thailand is known as the pickup capital of the world.

In the Philippines, D'Max has been No. 1 the last two years—and counting.

Isuzu Philippines used to import D'Max. But under Komura-san's robust leadership that began two years ago, the D'Max is now being assembled at the IPC plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, with CKD (completely knocked down) parts completely imported from Bangkok.

* * *

Komura, assigned to various key assignments in North America and China after joining Isuzu Motors Limited in Japan in April of 1978 at age 22, said he was happy that Isuzu is doing well despite "the hard, unpredictable times."

He attributes that to "our customers' total satisfaction that extends to our after-sales policy of treating them" with special care and attention.

"With the government as our No. 1 partner, we could always contribute to building a powerful economy and do our piece in providing jobs in our own humble way," said Komura, married to Miwa with whom he has a son (Shota) and a daughter (Mio). "A good business means a good backing from government."

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San Miguel Q1 profit up by 7% to ₱2.17B

Overseas operations provide big boost to sales

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL CORP., SOUTHEAST Asia's largest food and beverage firm, said its first quarter net income rose 7 percent to P2.17 billion, as foreign acquisitions boosted sales.

San Miguel chair Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. said consolidated net sales revenue for January to March reached P60.8 billion, 29 percent higher than the year-ago level.

This was driven by a 26-percent volume growth from the consolidated operations of Australian dairy giant National Foods Ltd., as well as a 13-percent growth in the sales volume of San Miguel's food and agribusiness operations.

Consolidated operating income reached P5.49 billion, 49 percent higher than last year's level.

"If 2005 was a year of acceleration, 2006 will be one of staying the course. With all the moving parts in place, we now shift our focus from an outward-looking, expansionist phase to one characterized by strengthening organic growth and enhancing operating efficiency," Cojuangco told stockholders.

San Miguel president Ramon Ang, in the meantime, said he was expecting the company's revenue to grow by 30 percent this year.

To sustain growth this year, Cojuangco said San Miguel needed to drive up its cash flow and strive to improve its core working capital.

Cojuangco also said San Miguel would maintain discipline in its capital expenditures and management of resources.

"Our priorities now are to sustain all the gains we have made over the last eight years and build on them," Cojuangco said.

San Miguel also announced it had appointed KPMG Laya Mananghaya & Co. as its new auditor, replacing SGV & Co.

In the meantime, Ang said San Miguel would pursue its planned offering of hybrid shares upon the completion of the probe of the alleged overstatement of sales by one of its subsidiaries.

The planned offering, which had already attracted $700 million worth of orders, was postponed after San Miguel received a letter claiming that Philippine Beverage Partners Inc. had overstated its sales figures.

The total sales of Philbev accounted for 2.1 percent of San Miguel's group-wide sales of P227 billion.

Cojuangco also announced that National Foods had completed its acquisition of Lactos, a leading specialty cheese company in Australia.

Cojuangco said San Miguel's acquisition of National Foods would lay the groundwork for value creation for San Miguel in the future.

San Miguel is also building up its capacity for beverage overseas. Cojuangco said two plants in South China and Vietnam "will follow soon." No details were given.

₱5B earmarked for sugar mills upgrade

By Christine A. Gaylican

LOCAL SUGAR MILLERS WILL infuse into the industry more than P5 billion worth of investments in the next three years to upgrade existing facilities and venture into power co-generation ventures.

The Central Azucarera de Pedro Group, Hawaiian Philippines Inc. and the Central Azucarera de Tarlac are planning to install new boilers that would allow them to venture into co-generation, Philippine Sugar Millers Association president V. Francisco Varua.

The co-generation scheme allows sugar millers to convert sugar bagasse into fuel and generate at least 9 megawatts of electricity, Varua said.

PSMA groups 22 sugar milling companies in the country. Together, PSMA members account for 80 percent of the country's total sugar production.

Varua said the huge investments were needed to enable the industry to cope with the expected increases in demand for sugar by-products that were used as alternative fuel and to strictly comply with antipollution standards.

"Investments are getting bigger and bigger but they are needed to cope with the needs of the times," he said.

He said the 15 PSMA members that have already complied with those standards had spent around P5 billion to install antipollution devices, including new boilers and smoke stacks.

He said the installation of three new smoke stacks would cost about P250 million, while a new boiler could amount to P500 million.

The needed investments account for nearly half the estimated P12 billion in revenue that the sugar milling industry generates yearly. He said it will take the industry five years to recover the required investments.

In line with the country's efforts to promote the development of alternative fuels, National Development Co. will put up an integrated ethanol plant in Negros Oriental under a joint venture with Herminio Teves and Co. and Tao Corp.

Philcomsat Holdings gets new lease on life

PHILCOMSAT HOLDINGS CORP. (PHC) YESterday managed to secure a new lease on life after a majority of its stockholders approved the board's proposal to prolong the firm's corporate life for another 50 years.

PHC yesterday convened a special stockholders' meeting at the Manila Golf and Country Club in Forbes Park.

On Monday, it secured an order from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) that allowed the board under PHC president Manuel Nieto Jr. to tackle the extension of the firm's corporate life which expires today.

Company vice president Philip Brodett presided over the tumultuous meeting in the absence of Nieto.

During the meeting, a verbal brawl erupted between the two opposing groups, which stalled the proceedings for nearly an hour.

Brodett and representatives of the Presidential Commission on Good Government were up against minority shareholders led by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, the Ilusorio family and lawyer Victor Africa.

After an intense wrangling between PCGG Commissioner for Asset Management Ricardo Abcede and Enrile, the motion to extend PHC's corporate existence was passed largely due to votes held by the PCGG, which were represented by Enrique Locsin.

"The next step is to file an application with the Securities and Exchange Commission to amend the articles of incorporation of the company," Brodett told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview after the stockholders' meeting.

PHC is 80-percent owned by satellite technology pioneer Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat). Both companies are owned by Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. (POTC), whose shares were sequestered by the Aquino administration in 1986 on allegations that the stocks were acquired using ill-gotten wealth.

During yesterday's meeting, the minority shareholders led by Enrile and Africa were upset over the absence of Nieto, and questioned the authority of Brodett and PHC assistant corporate secretary Delfin Angcao to preside over the assembly.

During the meeting, Enrile said he was in favor of dissolving PHC and distributing its assets among the company's shareholders.

"We (minority shareholders) want this company to be dissolved because the people managing this company are dissipating its assets," Enrile said.

Enrile is one of the founding shareholders of PHC's mother firm Philcomsat, of which about 7 percent is controlled by his family.

Brodett, however, denied there was dissipation of PHC's assets and said the company was expecting to generate net earnings this year, largely from its investment in a joint venture call center project with the SM Group.

In 2004, PHC invested P80 million in a 120-seat telemarketing project through a wholly owned unit, Telecommunications Center Inc. (TCI). *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

DOF rejects bid . . .

From page B1

at the legislature, is considered to be the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda.

The tax measure is estimated to generate P75 billion in additional revenues this year alone, and is expected to bring the government closer to its goal of wiping out its gaping budget deficit.

By 2008, the government hopes to close the budget gap, which last year stood at P146.8 billion.

Of the P75 billion in additional revenues, P5.6 billion will come from the higher corporate income tax rate.

The finance official said the 35-percent corporate income tax rate would be in effect until end-2008, as stated under the VAT law.

By 2009, the official said, the rate would be brought down to 30 percent, or even lower than the previous 32 percent.

But the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) earlier said that the 35-percent corporate income tax rate was proving to be burdensome for businesses, making the country's economic environment less competitive.

Noting that the new income tax rate is one of the highest in Asia, PCCI has asked the government to consider reducing the corporate income tax rate.

The PCCI said that while it supports the VAT law in general, it still would want some minor provisions amended.

Aside from bringing down the corporate income tax rate, PCCI is urging the repeal of the provision putting a 70-percent cap on input VAT credits.

According to the VAT law, the 70-percent cap means that the maximum amount of input VAT credits that a business entity can claim for one taxable period should be equivalent to 70 percent of its output VAT.

But after receiving a rash of complaints from business owners, the government issued a new set of implementing rules and regulations (IRR) that eased the application of the VAT cap provision.

According to the IRR, the 70-percent VAT cap would only apply to businesses whose input VAT credits exceed their output VAT. This means that those whose input VAT credits do not exceed the output VAT can still receive their claims in full.

But despite the relaxed interpretation of the 70-percent VAT cap, businesses are still calling for the removal of the provision.

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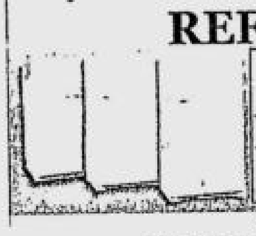

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BRANCHES Bacoor Tels: 529-8870 * (046) 417-3541, (046) 417-6373, Telefax: (046) 417-3483 * Pasig Tels: 642-6704, 642-6885, Telefax: 643-7133 * Baliuag Tels: (044) 766-7905, Telefax: (044) 673-3214 * San Fernando Tels: (045) 961-6015, (045) 963-1056, (045) 861-2618, Telefax: (045) 961-6014 * Cainta Tels: 655-9068, Telefax: 248-0209 * San Pablo Tels: (049) 562-7796, (049) 562-7756, Telefax: 520-6018 * Calamba Tels: (049) 545-6552, (049) 834-0619, Telefax: (049) 834-1890 * Tayug (Pangasinan) Tels: (075) 572-2454, (075) 572-2031; Telefax: (075) 572-2453 * Morong Tels: 691-6551, 691-5533, 653-0175, Telefax: 653-0170
MEMBER: PDIC. Deposits insured up to ₱250,000 per depositor.

PSE allows securities lending

Bourse issues rules, expects move to boost stocks trading

THE PHILIPPINE STOCK EXchange (PSE) said on Tuesday that investors would be able to trade using borrowed stocks by the second half of this year after it introduces rules for securities lending that would give a much-needed boost to liquidity.

"Securities lending has gained popularity in developed countries since it was first introduced in the 1970s, but the practice has not taken root in the Philippines because of the lack of rules," PSE president Francis Lim said.

"We need the sophistication of securities borrowing and lending to promote growth of other securities, especially derivatives, which are popular trading instruments in advanced markets abroad," Lim said in a statement.

Securities borrowing and lending involves the loan of securities by a lender—who owns or controls the securities—to a borrower, who needs the securities to support settlement obligations or trading strategies.

LIM

Lim explained that SBL transactions allow a lender to earn an extra income from his or her stocks outside of their dividend yield.

"Lending out the shares provides the lender an extra income, but at the same time the borrowed stock creates a cover or hedge for the borrower against a failed trade," he said.

The Philippine stock market finished down nearly 3 percent on Tuesday, ending a five-day bull run that saw it gain 14 percent as foreign investors were attracted by improving government finances and solid company earnings.

Analysts expect the market to keep climbing in 2006 but poor liquidity could restrict its gains.

The dominance of family holdings and cross-company stakes means that most of the Philippines' largest listed companies have only around 10 percent of their shares trading freely on the market.

The PSE's proposed SBL rules specify requirements, including a contract—called the master securities lending agreement or MSLA—which has to be registered with the BIR for tax exemption.

To be signed by the securities borrower and lender, the MSLA sets the terms, conditions and rights of each party, as well as the mechanics for the recall or return of the borrowed stock.

The rules also state that a borrower would have to put up collateral equal to at least 105 percent of the borrowed stock.

The lender would receive all dividends or stock rights that accrue to the security while on loan.

The issuance of the SBL rules is part of PSE's long-term program to create more liquidity in the local market.

The PSE said the Philippines' Securities and Exchange Commission, the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the central bank would also issue rules on securities trading. *Reuters*

Fil-Estate posts sharp decline in net income

By Daxim L. Lucas

FINANCIAL WOES CONTINUED to hound real estate developer Fil-Estate Land Inc. after it reported a sharp decline in its earnings for the first quarter of the year.

Speaking before shareholders at yesterday's annual meeting, Fil-Estate senior vice president and chief financial officer Roberto S. Roco said that the company's first quarter net income declined to only P16 million from the P25 million recorded in the same period last year.

He attributed the lower earnings to a decline in the company's payment in kind arrangements to settle outstanding obligations to its creditors—a move that effectively reduces Fil-Estate's earning assets.

So far, Fil-Estate has managed to trim down its bank loans to only P25 million from P177 million last year through these deals.

At the same time, however, he said that these debt-for-asset deals would make the company unable to match its earnings performance of last year, even as Fil-Estate tries to roll out new projects which would provide new revenue streams.

"We are actually projecting that sales will pick up later this year," he said.

During the period, Roco said the company—which used to be one of the country's biggest and most aggressive during the 1990s property boom—experienced a decline in its gross profits to only P270 million from the P315 million in the same period last year.

Fil-Estate's weak performance was also due to the fact that real estate buyers now shun pre-selling efforts of developers, which fueled the industry before the outbreak of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis.

The crisis caused the collapse of many real estate developers and many clients who paid in advance lost their investments.

"Buyers are now more discriminating and no longer buy on a pre-selling basis," Roco said.

During his presentation, Fil-Estate chairman and CEO Robert John Sobrepeña Jr. struck a contrite pose, saying that the company has learned from its mistakes of the late 1990s, and vowing not to repeat them.

"The lessons learned from the past economic crisis shall not be forgotten as we look for new ways to grow the company," he said.

Stocks close 2.97% lower

From page B1

"The purest form of profit-taking has emerged, and may continue in the next three days," said Nestor Aguila of DA Market Securities. "This correction is most welcome."

Dealers said property, banking and telecommunications stocks were expensive and would need to settle down before staging another run-up.

"The market is testing the 2,500 points support and will likely consolidate at that level," said Aguila.

SM Investments was top-traded, ending P3.50 lower to P249.

Bank of the Philippine Islands was down P2.50 to P69.

San Miguel A fell 50 centavos to P64, while San Miguel B lost one peso to P83. *AFP*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of May 9, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.1	7.1	6.9	7	133,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	39	39	38	38.5	641,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	71.5	71.5	68	69	1,968,800
China Banking Corp.	860	885	860	885	2,670
Citystate Savings Bank	20.25	20.25	20.25	20.25	600
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.45	4,930,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	73.5	73.5	71.5	72	131,200
International Exch. Bank	40	40	39.5	40	103,300
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	47	47	44	44	1,840,200
Philippine National Bank	37	37	36	37	223,600
Phil. Savings Bank	39	40	39	40	20,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	17	17	16.75	16.75	193,200
Security Bank Corp.	57	57	56	57	456,600
Union Bank of the Phil.	46	48	45.5	47.5	123,000
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.78	0.78	0.78	0.78	110,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	31	32	31	32	11,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	3490	3490	3370	3370	190
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.02	1.02	1	1	665,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	210	210	210	210	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2120	2120	2120	2120	1,150
Ivantage Corp.	1.36	1.36	1.28	1.28	15,599,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	45.5	47	45.5	46.5	3,877,100
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	48.5	50	48.5	49	2,462,400
Manila Electric Co. A	14.25	14.75	14.25	14.25	331,700
Manila Electric Co. B	21.5	22	21	21	1,342,000
Manila Water Co. Inc.	8	8	7.7	7.7	7,294,000
Petron Corp.	5	5	4.75	4.8	5,924,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.04	1.04	0.99	1.02	1,007,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	14,000
CADP Group Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	52,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23.5	24	23.5	24	133,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	37	37.5	36.5	37	233,200
Pancake House Inc.	4.15	4.2	4.15	4.2	83,000
RFM Corp.	0.8	0.81	0.79	0.79	410,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	3	3.15	2.95	3.05	1,422,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	30,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64.5	63.5	64	161,500
San Miguel Corp. B	83.5	83.5	82.5	83	394,900
Universal Robina Corp.	23.5	23.75	23.25	23.5	2,744,300
Vitarich Corp.	0.25	0.28	0.24	0.26	1,130,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.38	0.4	0.37	0.38	13,060,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.9	1.94	1.84	1.88	7,564,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.7	1,092,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	5.3	5.4	5.2	5.4	4,351,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.42	1.6	1.42	1.6	391,000
CHEMICALS					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.38	0.38	0.36	0.36	350,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	200,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	60,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.1	0.105	0.0975	0.1	7,900,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	1,500,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	15,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	23,000,000
Ayala Corp.	470	470	455	455	210,110
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.53	0.54	0.53	0.54	120,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	6.8	6.8	6.5	6.5	1,438,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.026	0.026	0.025	0.025	6,200,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.65	2,750,000
APC Group Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	1,400,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.009	0.009	0.0085	0.0085	152,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.04	1.04	5,334,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.1	2.4	2.1	2.26	641,000
ATN Holdings Inc. B	2.24	2.24	2.24	2.24	20,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.06	1.06	55,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.26	102,137,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	5.3	5.3	4.95	5	5,996,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.65	3.8	3.65	3.75	4,509,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	5,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	7.6	7.7	7.5	7.7	707,000
Medco Holdings	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	500,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	200,000
Pacifica	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	2,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.215	10,300,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.15	0.155	0.15	0.15	1,500,000
SM Investments Corp.	252.5	252.5	248	249	1,124,260
South China Resources Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	100,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.72	0.73	0.72	0.73	40,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	14.75	15	14	14.25	12,368,500
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	240,000
Belle Corp.	1.36	1.38	1.32	1.34	5,897,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	20,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.32	2,720,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	2.42	2.42	2.28	2.38	12,604,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.82	1.9	1.82	1.84	760,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.215	800,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.73	0.73	0.69	0.69	44,300,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.68	250,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.03	0.031	0.03	0.031	3,600,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.68	0.7	0.68	0.68	1,210,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.88	1.9	1.74	1.76	17,135,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	3	3.1	3	3.1	20,000
Interport Res.	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	55,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	58,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	300,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.59	0.62	0.56	0.62	2,510,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.86	1.86	1.74	1.82	132,596,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.27	0.28	0.26	0.27	56,060,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	600,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	350,000
Polar Property Holdings	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	202,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	11.75	11.75	11	11.5	629,900
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.34	0.34	0.32	0.32	5,870,000
SM Development Corp.	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	1,229,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	9	9	8.5	8.6	13,529,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.12	0.12	3,670,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	14.5	15	14.5	14.75	397,700
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	29,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.22	1.26	12,045,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1040	1040	1025	1035	73,500
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.4	3.45	3.25	3.3	7,196,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2270	2270	2150	2150	89,660
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.225	0.24	0.225	0.24	5,380,000
Ionics Inc.	1.38	1.4	1.38	1.4	265,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	2,200,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	7,900,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.12	1.18	1.1	1.18	286,000
Transpacific Broadband	1.38	1.42	1.36	1.38	102,000
Philweb Corp.	0.028	0.028	0.027	0.028	129,400,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	110,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	14.25	14.25	13.5	13.75	615,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.96	200,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	2,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.72	1.72	1.64	1.66	2,819,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3	3	3	5,131,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.68	0.68	0.62	0.64	950,000
EDUCATION					
iPeople Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	115,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.2	2.32	2.14	2.26	3,718,000
Paxys Inc.	10.75	11	10.75	11	699,200
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	3	3.6	3	3.5	19,613,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	2.95	3.6	2.95	3.55	9,856,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	203,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.1	8.1	7.9	7.9	4,027,000
Benguet Corp. A	12.5	12.5	12.25	12.25	45,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.84	1.9	1.84	1.9	265,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.37	0.37	0.36	0.37	17,040,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.41	0.41	0.39	0.4	12,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.025	216,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.028	86,700,000
Omico Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	144,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	4.15	4.2	4.05	4.2	13,754,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	4.3	4.3	4.05	4.3	7,655,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	29.5	30	29.5	29.5	439,300
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.41	0.41	0.38	0.41	1,170,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.65	0.65	0.6	0.62	1,750,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	2,610,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	265,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	74,500,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.26	1.3	1.18	1.3	7,331,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.3	2,757,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	11	12	10.75	11.75	1,816,200
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	15	15	15	15	944,600

CURRENCIES

May 9, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.786411	1.000000	51.3920
Japan	Yen	0.007045	0.008958	0.4604
United Kingdom	Pound	1.462252	1.859400	95.5583
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.101460	0.129016	6.6304
Switzerland	Franc	0.640452	0.814399	41.8536
Canada	Dollar	0.707267	0.899361	46.2200
Singapore	Dollar	0.501441	0.637633	32.7692
Australia	Dollar	0.604838	0.769112	39.5262
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.086136	2.652731	136.3292
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.209676	0.266624	13.7023
Brunei	Dollar	0.499848	0.635607	32.6651
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000090	0.000115	0.0059
Thailand	Baht	0.020948	0.026638	1.3690
UAE	Dirham	0.214118	0.272272	13.9926
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.271600	65.3501
ArgentinaPeso	0.259114	0.329489	16.9331	
Brazil	Real	0.381864	0.485578	24.9548
Denmark	Kroner	0.134131	0.170561	8.7655
India	Rupee	0.017546	0.022311	1.1466
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.218934	0.278396	14.3073
Mexico	New Peso	0.071946	0.091487	4.7017
New Zealand	Dollar	0.497728	0.632911	32.5266
South Africa	Rand	0.129743	0.164981	8.4787
Korea	Won	0.000848	0.001078	0.0554
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025079	0.031891	1.6389

CENTRAL NEGROS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Bacolod City
Tel. No. (034) 435-3641 - 55 • Fax No. (034) 435-4079

INVITATION TO A PRE-QUALIFICATION CONFERENCE AND SEALED BIDDING

Interested parties are hereby invited to a **PRE-QUALIFICATION CONFERENCE** and **SEALED BIDDING** for the **SUPPLY** of the following:

1. THIRTY (30) PCS. POWER CAPACITOR, DOUBLE BUSHING 100KVAR, 7620 VOLTS, BIL95KV, 60 HZ SINGLE PHASE, BRAND NEW.
2. FIFTEEN (15) PCS. POWER CAPACITOR, DOUBLE BUSHING 150KVAR, 7620 VOLTS, BIL95KV, 60 HZ, SINGLE PHASE, BRAND NEW.
3. STEEL POLES OF VARIOUS SIZES, 30', 35', 75', 80' 85' & 90'. HOT DIPPED GALVANIZED; 100 MICRONS.
4. CONDUCTORS, POLY INSULATED AAC#6; DUPLEX WIRE ACSR#6 & TW WIRE #10.
5. SERVICE DEAD END GRIP #6; SPOOL INSULATOR 1 3/8"; COMPRESSION CONNECTOR 28AU, BURNDY & ROUND METER BASE SOCKET 100 AMP. 1" HUB, 4 JAWS WITH SEALING RING, BRAND G.E. OR ITS EQUIVALENT.

A pre-qualification conference will be held on the following date and time stated below at the 3rd floor, CENECO Main Building, corner Gonzaga & Mabini Streets, Bacolod City, where all other related matters and technical description and specification will be discussed.

ITEM NO.	DATE	TIME
1 & 2	MAY 25, 2006	10.00 A.M.
3	MAY 25, 2006	2:00 P.M.
4 & 5	MAY 26, 2006	10.00 A.M.

Only qualified bidders who were present during the pre-qualification conference will be allowed to participate in the bidding.

Sealed bid must be accompanied by Bid Security equivalent to 5% of the total bid price in the form of cash, certified cheque, manager's cheque, or surety bond issued by a surety or insurance company valid for at least one hundred twenty (120) days

Sealed bids must be received on or before June 13, 2006 for item no. 1, 2 & 3, and on June 14, 2006 for items 4 & 5, 10:00 A.M. at the above address at which time and place the said proposal will be opened and read in the presence of bidder's representative.

Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from the Procurement Section at the 2nd Floor CENECO Main Building, phone No. 435-3641 to 55 local 236.

The Central Negros Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CENECO) hereby reserves the right to reject any or all bids without disclosing any reason, to waive any minor disclosing any reason, to waive any minor defects or infirmities therein, and to accept such bids as may be deemed advntageous to CENECO.

(Sgd.) NORIEL A. BERMUDEZ
O.I.C. General Manager

(PDI – May 8, 9 & 10, 2006)

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation
Republic of the Philippines

Section I.

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid
Supply and Delivery of Network Switches, SFP Transceiver, Security Software, Firewall and Symantec Renewal
(Reference No.: PB060215-EL0018)

1. The *National Transmission Corporation, Head Office Region (TRANSCO-HO)* through the *CY2006 Corporate Budget approved by the TRANSCO Board*, intends to apply the sum of *Php 2,351,000.00* being the Total Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the **Supply and Delivery of Network Switches, SFP Transceiver, Security Software, Firewall and Symantec Renewal.** Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The *TRANSCO-HO* now invites Bids from Eligible Bidders for *Various ICT Resources*. Delivery of the GOODS is required *within thirty (30) calendar days from receipt of approved Purchase Order*. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from the Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders, starting May 10, 2006 to June 13, 2006 from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of *One Thousand Pesos (PhP 1,000.00)*. The method of payment will be CASH. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
5. The *TRANSCO-HO* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **May 29, 2006 at 2:00 P.M.** at same address below. Requests for clarifications on the bid documents should be submitted before the Pre-Bid Conference.
6. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before **2:00 P.M. of June 14, 2006.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following form and amount:

Form of Security	Amount
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	1% of ABC
2. Bank guarantee	1.5% of ABC
3. Surety bond	2.5% of ABC
4. Foreign government guarantee	100% of ABC

or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late bids shall not be accepted.

7. Bid opening shall be on **June 14, 2006 / 2:00 P.M.** at the *Admin Conference Rm. same address below*. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
8. The *National Transmission Corporation* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

National Transmission Corporation, Head Office Region
Mr. Armando N. Ochoa, BAC Chairman
MMD Office, G/F TransCo Main Bldg
Power Center, Quezon Ave. corner BIR Road
Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. No. (632) 9812235 / Fax No. (632) 9228432
Website: www.transco.ph

(Sgd.) ARMANDO N. OCHOA
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – May 10 & 17, 2006)

IAEB No. 2006-005

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The PHILIPPINE INTERNATIONAL TRADING CORPORATION BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE (PITC-BAC), invites Contractors with current and valid PCAB License registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractor Association Board (PCAB) with CIAP Registration of at least Small B to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for hereunder project/contract:

Name of Contract	Construction of the PITC BOTIKA NG BAYAN / PHARMA SALES OFFICE
Location	Ground Floor, Onent Mansion Building Tordesillas Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City
Brief Description	Complete Construction of estimated 275 sq.m. area for Botika ng Bayan / Pharma Sales Office : Architectural / civil / electrical / mechanical works, plumbing / painting and other related works, cleaning and protecting the premises
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	Two Million Three Hundred Fifty Thousand Pesos (PhP2,350,000.00) *VAT Inclusive*
Contract Duration	Sixty (60) Calendar Days

The PITC-BAC calls for the submission of Letters of Intents (LOIs) from Interested Bidders to apply for eligibility for the Complete Construction of the PITC BOTIKA NG BAYAN/PHARMA SALES OFFICE

Bidding procedures shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)

The BAC will issue to interested bidders Eligibility Forms/Documents at the 4th Floor NDC Building, Tordesillas Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City c/o Ms. Helen R. Muncal, upon their submission of a LOI, and upon payment of non-refundable amount of One Thousand Pesos (PhP1,000.00), and if found eligible shall purchase a complete set of Bidding Documents upon presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, upon payment of a non refundable fee of Three Thousand Pesos (PhP3,000.00) only.

The schedule of BAC Activities are as follows:

	BAC ACTIVITIES	Date & Time	Venue / Address
1.	Submission of Interested Bidders' Letter of Intent (LOI) and Issuance of Eligibility Documents	May 04 to 12, 2006	4th Floor NDC Bldg., 116 Tordesillas St., Salcedo Vil., Makati City c/o Ms. Helen R. Muncal, BAC Secretariat
2.	Submission and Opening of Accomplished Eligibility Requirements	May 17, 2006, Deadline for submission : 12:00 noon Opening of Eligibility Docs.: 1:30 pm	Same as above
3.	Notice of Results of Eligibility Check	May 22 – 23, 2006	Same as above
4	Issuance of Bid Documents	May 24 – 26, 2006	Same as above
5	Pre-Bid Conference	May 29, 2006 02:00 pm	2nd Floor, NDC Bldg., Tordesillas St., Salcedo Vil., Makati City
6.	Site Inspection	May 29 – 30, 2006	G/F, Orient Mansion, Tordesillas St., Salcedo Vil., Makati City (beside NDC Bldg.)
7	Submission and Opening of Bids	June 09, 2006 10:00 am	2nd Floor, NDC Bldg., Tordesillas St., Salcedo Vil., Makati City

PITC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby including any liability to the affected bidder or bidders. Further, PITC assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the prospective Bidders for any expenses incurred in the processing of their eligibility to bid and/or in the preparation of their bids.

(Sgd.) MARIO M. LEYGO
BAC Chairman

(PDI - May 4 & 10, 2006)

"We know that God raised the Lord Jesus from death. He will raise us to life with Jesus. He will present us, along with you, to God."

2 Corinthians 4:14

---

*FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST
AND TO DIE IS GAIN*
Philippians 1:21

Our Dearly Beloved
Inang Arseng

ARSENIA ROXAS CAPISTRANO

of Obando, Bulacan

Peacefully joined our Lord on May 5, 2006 at the age of 84.

Her husband, **Eliseo** (†), loving children, **Mel & Lily, Celing & Penny, Mario, Mercy & Eyo, Jun & Ellen, Senia & Noel** and **Josie & Leo**; grandchildren, great grandchildren and other relatives express sincerest appreciation to all those who, in countless ways, are comforting them in this hour of bereavement.

Her remains lie in state at the Capistrano residence in San Pascual, Obando, Bulacan.

Interment will be on Sunday, May 14, 2006 at the Zaldea Memorial Park, Obando, Bulacan, right after the 2:00 p.m. necrological services at Obando Central UMC, San Pascual, Obando, Bulacan.

The Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic
wish to announce the entrance into eternal life of

Sr. Miriam Thomas Thornton, M.M.

On May 7, 2006 at the age of 96.

At the Maryknoll Sisters Center in New York

She had been a Maryknoll Sister for seventy-seven years. She was assigned to Maryknoll College in 1936 when it was still Maryknoll Normal School and spent fifty years of her missionary life in service to the school. It was her vision, in response to Vatican II, that saw the eventual transfer of the school into the hands of competent lay persons.

Sr. Miriam Thomas was among the Maryknoll Sisters who were interned at Los Baños during World War II.

MESSAGE OF THANKS

We, the family and relatives of the late

LORINDA M. CARLOS

**former Executive Director
of the Bureau of Local Government Finance
of the Department of Finance**

who joined the Creator on 30 April 2006,

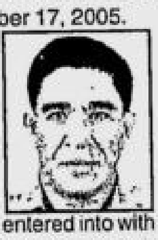
sincerely convey our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who offered Masses and prayers, sent flowers, visited and kept vigil, attended the funeral rites, and offered us solace and comfort in our moment of grief.
We also thank you for joining us in remembering her, who in so many ways has touched our lives forever.

CLASSIFIEDS

We design **OBITUARIES** for free.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Please be informed that **MR. CARLITO C. GALITA** whose picture appears below has ceased to be connected in any capacity with **AIRBORNE SECURITY SERVICE, INC.** effective November 17, 2005.



Any transactions entered into with this person from and after the date mentioned above shall not be honored and shall not be for the responsibility of the company.

AIRBORNE SECURITY SERVICE, INC.
Andrea Bldg. 1, 1009 G.M. Tolentino St., Sampaloc, Manila
Tel. No.: (02) 7357554/55/59; Fax No.: (02) 7357557

(PDI - May 8, 10 & 12, 2006)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

We have been receiving information that there are people who are using **AIRBORNE SECURITY SERVICE, INC.** for the purpose of maligning its dignity and reputation to gain advantage for personal interest.

Please beware of these people.

Should you come across the identity of these people, please report to our office immediately.

AIRBORNE SECURITY SERVICE, INC.
Andrea Bldg. I, 1009 G.M. Tolentino St., Sampaloc, Manila
Tel. No.: (02) 7357554/55/59; Fax No.: (02) 7357557

(PDI - May 8, 10 & 12, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
Local Civil Registry Office
Province of Misamis Oriental
Cagayan de Oro City

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. No. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that **DIONITA G. GUDEN** has filed with this Office a petition for change of first name from **DELIA** to **DIONITA** in the Certificate of Live Birth of **DELIA A. GAMBOA** who was born on December 16, 1956 at **PURA, TARLAC** and whose parents are **ALFREDO GAMBOA** and **SUSANA AGANON**.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition within this office not later than May 19, 2006.

NORMA S. DIPUTADO
City Civil Registrar

(PDI--May 10 & 17, 2006)

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SEE CIO TAN

*Peacefully joined her Creator
on May 5, 2006 at the age of 98.*

Her loving children **Calixtro** (†), **Ricardo**, **Jesus** (†), **Siuking**, **Narcisa**, **Leoncio**, **Caysing**, **Belena**, **Solaida** and **Raymond**, together with the in-laws, grandchildren, great grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Friday, May 12, 2006, 9:00 a.m. at Heaven's Gate.

INES S. PEREZ

of Guagua, Pampanga

*Peacefully joined the Lord
on May 7, 2006 at the age of 98.*

Her children **Nene, Jr.** and **Mely**, **Nardo** and **Ising**, **Aling**, **Lily** and **Floren**, **Eloy** and **Vicky**, **Cleo** and **Toty**, **Luz** and **Iggy**, **Boy** and **Nena**, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Nacional Memorial Homes, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, May 13, 2006 after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at Our Lady of Miraculous Medal, Proj. 4, Quezon City.

LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
Tel. Nos. Q.C.: 712-3001 • 743-6502; Mla.: 711-6931 to 35

NAME OF DECEASED	PLACE OF VIEWING	INTERMENT/CREMATION	
		DATE & TIME	PLACE
See Cio Tan	Chapel A-1 Q.C.	May 12, 2006 9:00 a.m.	Heaven's Gate

---

LUCIO P. ESPINOZA, SR.

*peacefully joined his Creator on May 8, 2006
at the age of 87.*

His loving wife **Albina**, and their children together with their spouses: **Gay** and **Lindo**, **Ann** and **Boy**, **Cherrie** and **Jun**, and **Lucio Jr.** and **Heidi**, and grandchildren: **Kristin** and **Loi**, **Krisette**, **Jec-Jec**, **Joann**, **Camille** and **Gerard**, **Jeffrey**, **Alvin**, **Roseanne**, **Trisha**, and **Paolo**, and great grandchildren: **Krizlyn** and **Charles** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in the St. Rose of Lima Parish Church in Sta. Rosa, Nueva Ecija.

Interment will be on Thursday, May 11, 2006, 9:00 a.m. at Sta. Rosa Cemetery.

In Loving Memory
on the
15th Death Anniversary
of

DANIEL M. RAGASA

January 3, 1915 – May 10, 1991

To Our Everdearest Daddy:

The years that have passed have in no way diminished the pain of your loss in our midst, but we know that you are in better hands with Him, the Almighty God. For now, the memories of your goodness, your unselfish love for all of us, and our wonderful times together will fill our hearts and minds till we join you for all eternity...

We love you ...

Loving wife Doris; and children Myrna, Dante, Eddie, Doris and Daisy. We request relatives, friends and pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

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On: Saturday, 13 May 2006 - 1:00pm (local time)
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Ortigas Center, Pasig City, Philippines
On View: Saturday, 13 May 2006 from 9am to 1pm
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CANTEEN/RESTAURANT FURNITURE - (46) Wooden Framed Fabric Upholstered Dining Chairs; Dining Tables; (66) Canteen Tables; (66) Stackable Chairs, etc.
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For further information please contact Jeric Cupin at
Tel: 852 2910 loc. 110 Email: jeric.cupin@henrybutcher.com
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Rm. 102 Jolliland Bldg., 670 Edsa, Pasay City
Tel No.: 852 2910/11 or 854 4917-19 Fax No.: 831 9507
E-mail:manila@henrybutcher.com

OUTSTANDING PRIVILEGE CARD PROVIDER
Shown are President Shiela M. Domingo and Vice President Franz Joseph B. Domingo of SMD Marketing Corp. (Citylimits Privilege Card) receiving an award for the Most Outstanding Privilege Card Provider for the year 2005, from Philippine Marketing Excellence Award Institute, The Asian Institute of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, and The Sales and Marketing Magazine last February 26, 2006 at the Philippine Plaza Hotel.

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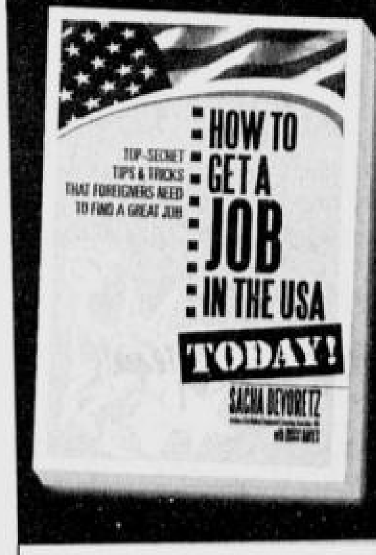

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BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

In Compliance with RA 7041

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

1. **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OFFICER III** –
Item No. OMBA-HRMO3-15-2003; SG 18

Education: Bachelor's degree; Experience: 2 years of relevant experience, Training: 8 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: Career Service Professional / Second Level Eligibility

Applicants should submit within ten (10) calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for:
2) Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1" x 1" picture (colored)
4) * Bar/Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility
5) * Transcript of Records;
6) * Certificates of Seminars / Training attended;
7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable)
8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only);
9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

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The Asian Bond Fund 2 has moved into Implementation Phase.

What is ABF2?

The Asian Bond Fund (ABF) is an initiative that aims at broadening and deepening the domestic and regional bond markets in Asia. According to a press release of the EMEAP (Executives' Meeting of East Asia and Pacific Central Banks) Group, which is comprised of 11 central banks and monetary authorities in the East Asia and Pacific region, the first stage of ABF (ABF1) was launched in June 2003. The first stage is comprised of investments in US dollar denominated bonds issued by Asian sovereign and quasi-sovereign issuers in EMEAP economies (excluding Australia, Japan and New Zealand). Building on the success of ABF1, the Group has worked to extend the ABF concept to bonds denominated in local currencies and has announced the launch of the second stage of ABF (ABF2) in December 2004.

ABF2 comprises a Pan-Asian Bond Index Fund (PAIF) and eight Single-market Funds. The PAIF is a single bond fund investing in sovereign and quasi-sovereign local currency-denominated bonds issued in the eight EMEAP markets. The eight Single-market Funds will each invest in sovereign and quasi-sovereign local currency-denominated bonds issued in the respective EMEAP markets.

The launch of ABF2 represents a historic milestone in central banking cooperation in the region.

What are the benefits of ABF2?

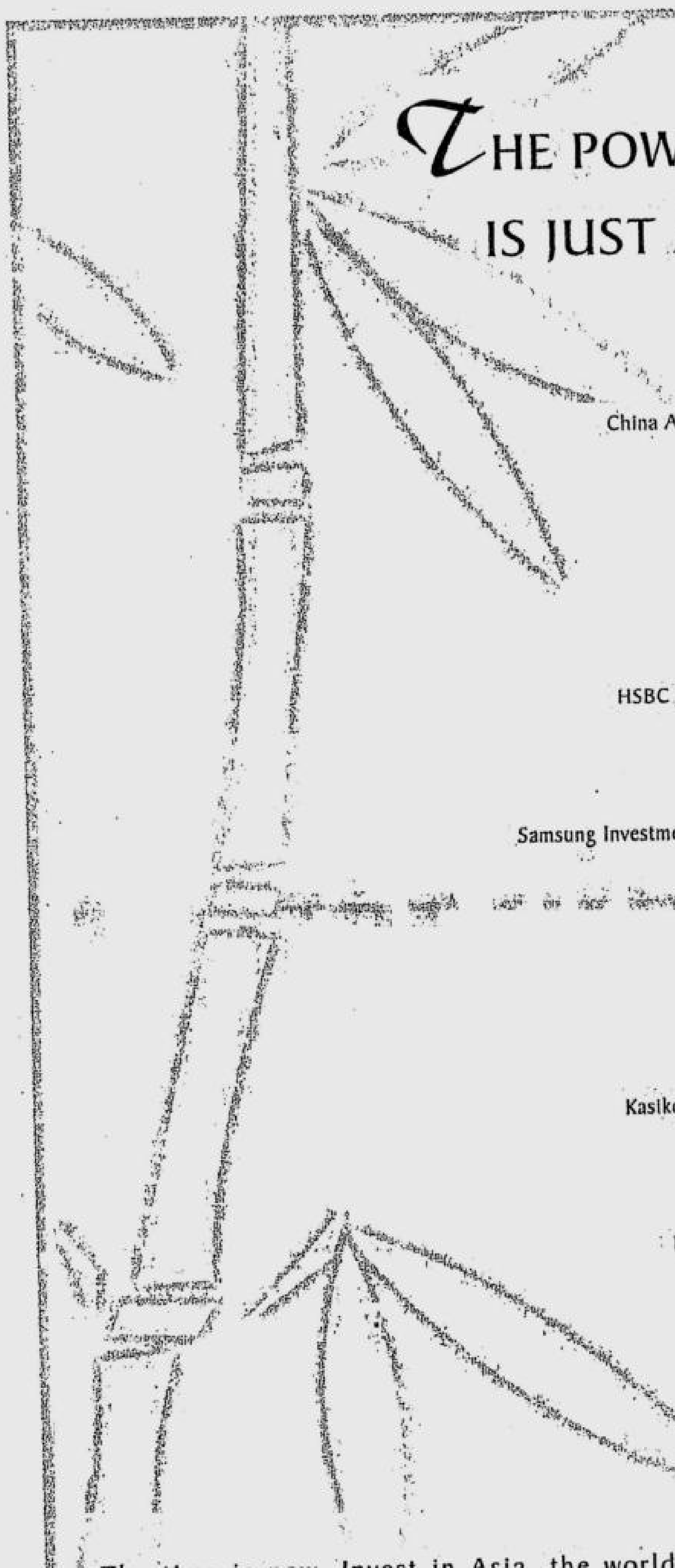
According to EMEAP's press release in May 2005, in the near term, the ABF2 Initiative is expected to help raise investor awareness and interest in Asian bonds by providing innovative, low-cost and efficient products in the form of passively managed bond funds. Further ahead, it is believed that it serves to further broaden and deepen the domestic and regional bond markets and hence, contribute to more efficient financial intermediation in Asia, specifically through the following means:

- **Promoting new products**
  In many ways, the PAIF and the eight Single-market Funds represent a new asset class in Asia. For instance, as a listed passive bond fund, the PAIF will act as a convenient and cost-effective investment fund for regional and international investors who wish to have a well-diversified exposure to bond markets in the eight EMEAP markets.

- **Improving market infrastructure**
  In setting up the ABF2 Funds, EMEAP has sought to improve market infrastructure in several aspects. For instance, the introduction of the iBoxx® ABF indices, which are by design transparent, replicable and credible, is an important piece of market infrastructure for Asia. The indices are compiled based on prices provided by a number of active market makers, and accordingly can better reflect the prevailing market conditions for the underlying bonds.

- **Accelerating developments in relevant EMEAP markets**
  The ABF2 Initiative has helped accelerate tax and regulatory reform at both regional and domestic levels to facilitate cross-border investments. For instance, the PAIF is the first foreign institutional investor that has been granted access to China's interbank bond market. Malaysia has, with effect from 1 April 2005, liberalized its foreign exchange administration rules. Earlier on, it has opened up its domestic market to issuances by multilateral development banks and multilateral financial institutions, and non-resident investors are now exempted from withholding tax on the interest income received from investment in Ringgit-denominated debt securities. Effective from 7 January 2005, Thailand has also granted non-resident investors withholding tax exemption for all income from investing in Thai government bonds and government agency bonds. Where applicable, EMEAP economies are actively developing the relevant regulations to facilitate listing of bond funds or fixed income Exchange-Traded Fund in their respective markets. Further measures are anticipated as the ABF2 Initiative is being implemented.

BPI is the fund manager of the ABF Philippines Bond index Fund. It is part of the 8 Single-market Funds of ABF2. The fund offers investors the potential for high earnings at a low minimum investment. BPI is the largest fund manager in the country with over 259 billion pesos in assets held in trust.



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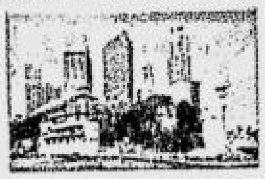
China Asset Management Corporation Limited
Tel No.+8610-88066688



ABF Singapore Bond Index Fund
DBS Asset Management Limited
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ABF Hong Kong Bond Index Fund
HSBC Investment Funds (Hong Kong) Limited
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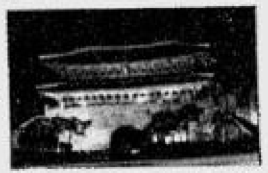

ABF Korea Bond Index Fund
Samsung Investment Trust Management Company Limited
Tel No.+82-2-3774-7600

ABF Malaysia Bond Index Fund
AmInvestment Management Sdn. Bhd.
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ABF Thailand Bond Index Fund
Kasikorn Asset Management Company Limited
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ABF Philippines Bond Index Fund
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Asian Bond Fund
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The ABF Philippines Bond Index Fund is the country's first Bond Index fund. It generates income from investing in a portfolio of peso-denominated sovereign and quasi-sovereign bonds while allowing exposure to Philippine Bond market at a low cost. Delivered by the strength of BPI Asset Management's 154 years of asset management experience and expertise.

Call and take advantage of this opportunity today.

Participation Details*	
Investment Objective	To achieve returns that closely track the iBoxx® ABF Philippines Index
Base Currency	Philippine Peso
Min. Investment	P100,000.00
Min. Additional Investment/Withdrawal	P100,000.00
Minimum Holding Period	90 days
Distribution Network	Selected BPI Branches
Management Fee**	0.274% per annum
Trustee Fee	0.08% per annum
Early Redemption Fee	1.00% of the NAVPU
Trustee and Custodian Bank	The Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited
Fund Manager	Bank of the Philippine Islands

* The features of the Fund contained herein may vary subject to proper disclosure as provided in the trust deed.
** The Fund is also subject to other operational expenses such as, but not limited to audit, index licensing and custody fees

- Investors may invest or withdraw at the prevailing Net Asset Value per Unit valued at market price daily by submitting their orders before the dealing deadline of 12 nn. The actual amount of the investment or withdrawal will only be ascertained on the transaction date where the price of the Units is made available.
- Investors are entitled to assign in writing their holdings in the Fund subject to the minimum investment and withdrawal amounts applicable at the time of transfer
- BPI Asset Management offers a wide array of UITFs. Each UITF has its own investment policy and objective to suit clients' investment requirements and risk preference. A copy of the Trust Deed/Plan Rules of each particular fund, is available at the principal office of the Trustee and all the offices of the Fund Manager and Receiving Agents where the Fund is made available
- Any connected person of the Fund Manager may, as principal, buy or sell investments in the Fund entered into on an arm's length basis and consistent with the standards of "best execution" as defined in the Trust Deed. Likewise, the Fund Manager may effect agency cross transactions (sale/purchase of investment effected for the Trust Client of the Fund Manager and/or its Connected Persons) in accordance with applicable law and regulations.
- ABF PBIF is a unit investment trust fund and not a bank deposit product. It is not guaranteed by the Manager, the Trustee, nor by the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation. The price of the Units may rise as well as fall. On the redemption of Units, an investor may receive an amount less than the original amount of investment. The price of the units may be adversely affected by fluctuations in the interest rates and currencies, as well as the credit quality of the Fund's investments. Political and economic risks also need to be taken into account. Any loss or income is for the account of the Trustors. The Manager and the Trustee of the Fund are not liable for losses except those attributable to the Manager's or the Trustee's act of fraud, willful default, gross negligence, or evident bad faith. Investors are advised to read the Trust Deed of the Fund before deciding to invest.

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More investments going to Mindanao, Neda says

Agency says rise due to improving peace and order situation

COTABATO CITY—INVESTMENTS IN TWO war-torn regions in Mindanao have been increasing as peace and order conditions continue to improve, officials said.

The National Economic Development Authority (Neda) reported that for the first quarter of the year, Central Mindanao posted a 60-percent increase in investments compared to the same period last year.

Lourdes Damaso-Lim, Neda 12 director, said the region, which suffered from recent skirmishes between the military and Moro rebels, recorded a total of P4.4 billion in fresh capital for the first three months of the year.

Last year's investment figure for the period was only P2.7 billion, she said.

Central Mindanao is made up of this city, the cities of Koronadal, General Santos, Kidapawan and Tacurong and the provinces of North and South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani.

Lim said the impressive figure was due to the the establishment of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Park here, the coming of medical transcription companies, marine dry dock facilities and a shopping mall.

"A huge cold storage plant for marine and aquatic products, a mango processing facility and a mountain tourist resort were the investment contributions derived from Sarangani, North and South Cotabato," Lim said.

"The prospects of much better exports of marine and agricultural products loom with these new-found investors," Ibrahim Guiamadel, director of the Department of Trade and Industry in Central Mindanao, said.

Guiamadel said last year's export earnings of $430.7 million, which was 13.2 percent higher than the previous year, was expected to grow further with the coming of fresh investments into the fishery sector.

As with Central Mindanao, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is also experiencing a substantial growth in capital inflow, according to DTI-ARMM Secretary Ishak Mastura.

Mastura said that for the first quarter this year, at least P146 million in fresh funds were poured into the region.

Like Central Mindanao, the ARMM, composed of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi and the city of Marawi, is considered a hotbed of Moro insurgency.

ARMM Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan said he expected the investment figure to increase in the coming months as efforts to push the region as an alternative investment destination was being intensified.

Ampatuan, who flew to Saudi Arabia with President Macapagal-Arroyo, said he was expecting Saudi investors to consider the region for their expansion projects. *Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

CalEnergy to turn over Leyte plant to PNOC

By Vicente S. Labro
PDI Visayas Bureau

ORMOC CITY—A 130-MEGAwatt geothermal power plant in Leyte built under the build-operate-transfer (BOT) scheme will soon be turned over by American firm California Energy to state-run Philippine National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EDC).

Paul Aquino, PNOC-EDC president and chief executive officer, said the ceremonial turnover of the Upper Mahiao Geothermal Plant was set on June 15.

But the formal turnover was set on June 25, he said, to coincide with PNOC-EDC's 30th anniversary and the 10th anniversary of the power plant's operation.

"It's the first BOT to be turned over to the Philippine government," Aquino told the INQUIRER recently at the PNOC-EDC administration complex here.

Aquino said that after the turnover, "we will now own it and operate it because we were the ones paying (for the power plant)."

The Upper Mahiao power plant is located inside the vast Leyte Geothermal Production Field (LGPF) here.

Aquino stressed that the most important thing was that PNOC-EDC would no longer pay rent for the plant, "because the rental is the one that has been killing us."

Upper Mahiao was said to hold the record of being the world's biggest geothermal plant using the geothermal combined cycle units (GCCU) technology in a single powerhouse.

Located in Sitio Upper Mahiao in Kananga, Leyte, the Upper Mahiao geothermal power plant started commercial operations on June 25, 1996.

Aquino also disclosed that other BOT power projects—the Mahanagdong A, Mahanagdong B, Malitbog and all Ormoc plants as well as the Mindanao Apo I—are also to be turned over next year.

The Mindanao Apo II will follow in 2009.

"So, everything will be with us in 2009," he said.

Aquino said PNOC-EDC projected that by 2011, the agency would have "free cash."

"This means we can [start giving] cash dividends to the government," he said.

While it has the most geothermal plants under its wing, the government run firm continues to invest in exploration.

Aquino said one possible site is San Juan, Southern Leyte.

Aquino said PNOC-EDC was "confident that the Southern Leyte project will be a go."

But he added that the Southern Leyte power project would again be dependent on many factors, like the Transmission Corp. (Transco) having line connection to Mindanao to justify putting up the power plant.

Aquino, however, said that for PNOC-EDC's part, it wanted to push through with the project to help the people affected by the recent landslides in Southern Leyte.

He added they might even advance the project because of the tragedy.

BINATBATAN FESTIVAL. Performers show their dancing skills along historic Crisologo Street Vigan City. The festival got its name from the Iloco term, batbatin, or separating cotton balls from the seeds of the local fruit tree, kapas sanglay. The cotton balls are then spun and used to weave abel Iloko

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BUSINESS

4-month car sales down 3%

By Abigail L. Ho

VEHICLE SALES IN THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS of the year dropped 3 percent to 29,329 units from last year's 30,246 units, due mainly to the usual April sales slump and temporary stock and supply problems caused by shipment delays.

According to the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc., April sales dropped 12.7 percent against March figures to 7,264 units.

Campi president Elizabeth Lee said the decline in April was slowed by the introduction of new models, as well as promos and other marketing activities by the assemblers.

Overall sales would likely increase in the May-June period, she said.

April is usually a slow vehicle sales month as money is set aside for tax payments and school tuition.

Commercial vehicle sales, while registering a 1.9-percent decline in the first four months of the year to 18,435 units, still accounted for the bulk of overall vehicle sales during the period at 63 percent.

Sales in April alone plunged 11.8 percent against March figures across all segments, which included light commercial vehicles (LCV), Asian utility vehicle (AUV), trucks and buses.

Japanese manufacturers accounted for bulk of January-April sales, led by Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. with 11,549 units sold and a market share of 39.38 percent.

Following Toyota are Honda Cars Philippines Inc. with 3,683 units sold and a market share of 12.56 percent, Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Inc. with 3,623 units sold and a market share of 12.35 percent, and Isuzu Philippines Corp. with 2,640 units sold and a market share of 9 percent.

Seaoil sets terms for ethanol plan

SEAOIL PETROELUM CORP. SAID IT WOULD only push through with its plan to put up its own ethanol facility when the biofuels bill becomes law.

Seaoil president Glenn Yu said the company's decision was contingent on the passage of the law on biofuels as this would create a market for gasoline blended with ethanol.

The pending biofuels bill will make mandatory the sale and use of gasoline blended with 5-percent ethanol and diesel with 1-percent coco methyl ester (CME).

Seaoil was the first oil firm in the country to sell gasoline pre-blended with ethanol directly from its pumps.

Yu said that since the launch of its ethanol-blended gasoline in August 2005 in selected stations in Metro Manila and in October 2005 in all its stations nationwide, the oil firm had so far sold 2.5 million liters of the product.

Ethanol-blended gasoline currently accounts for 5 percent of the company's total revenue, he said.

Based on the demand trend since Seaoil launched its ethanol-blended gasoline, he said the oil firm would need between 5 million and 7 million liters of ethanol a year.

New shipments are expected to arrive in the country from Brazil by next month, he said.

Without a local ethanol facility, he said Seaoil would continue depending on Brazil, the world's most cost-efficient ethanol producer, for supply.

British firm Bronzeoak Ltd., through local arm Bronzeoak Philippines Ltd., has tied up with National Development Corp. to establish the San Carlos Bio-Energy Inc. plant, an integrated facility that will be able to produce some 100,000 liters of bio-ethanol a day.

It will also have a cane milling plant with a throughput capacity of 1,500 metric tons of cane daily, as well as a co-generation power plant that will produce around 9 megawatts (MW) of power, of which 4 MW will be sold to the grid. It will start commercial operations next year.

Bronzeoak Philippines will also invest P1.5 billion to bankroll the construction of a dedicated ethanol plant in Southern Bukidnon.

Abigail L. Ho

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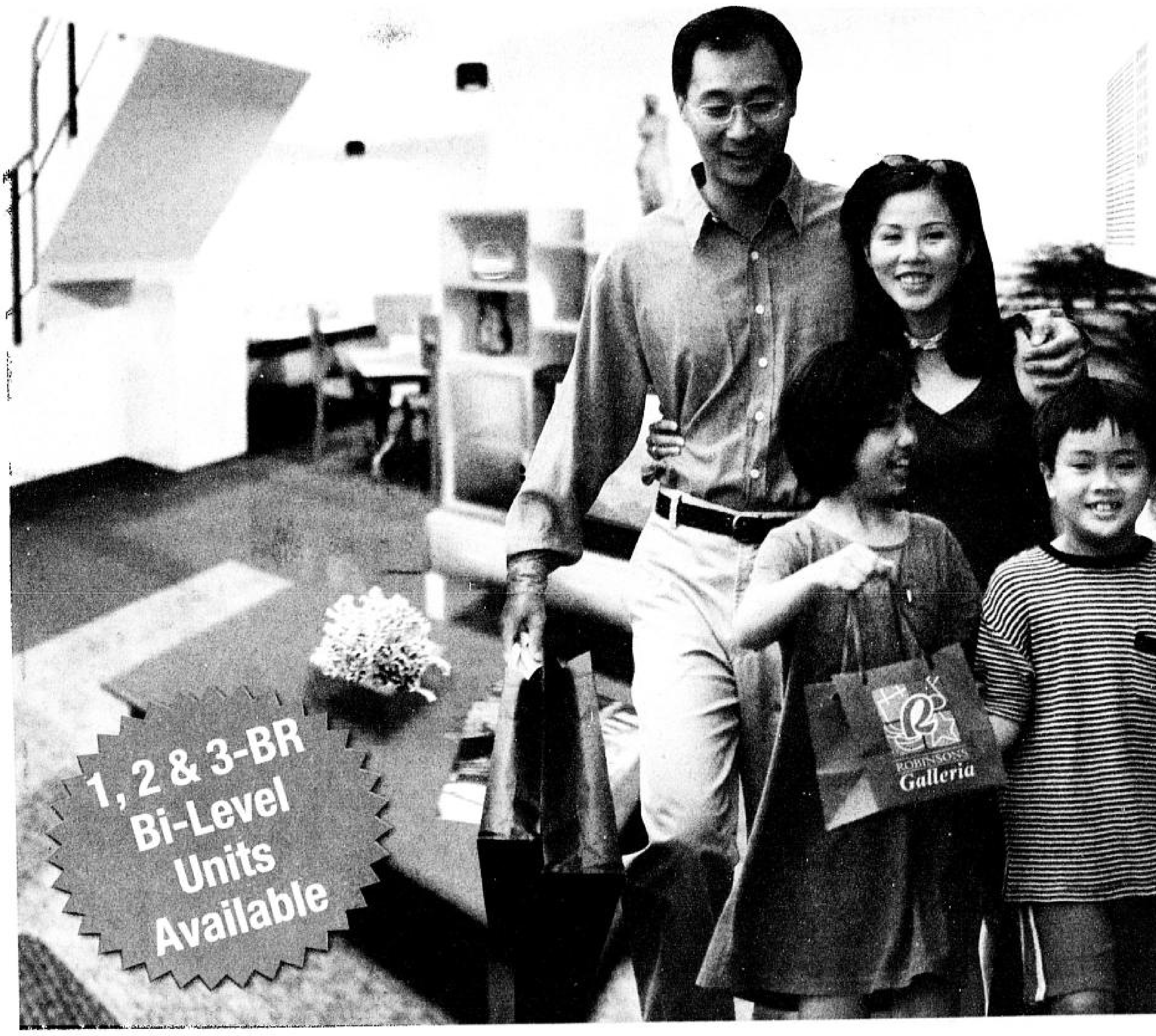

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Mother's Day scrapbook

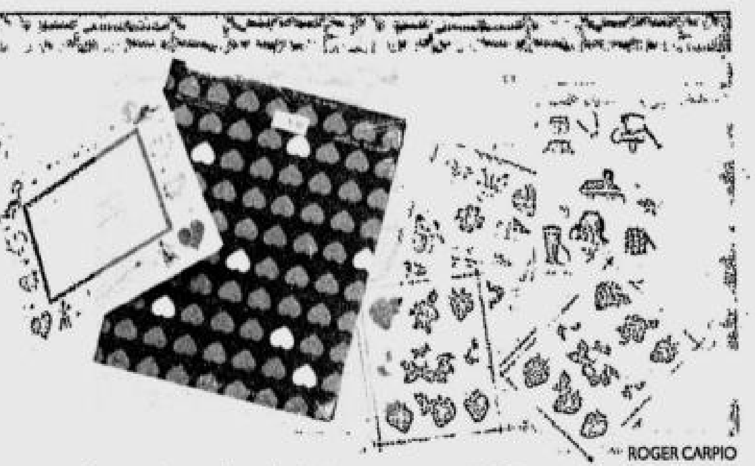
DEAR MOMS,

We wouldn't be here if it weren't for you. We believe that a day isn't enough to celebrate all the good things you've done for us, and so we've decided to turn Mother's Day into Mother's Week. (Or maybe even Mother's Year?) We asked our writers and readers to tell us about you and how much your presence has changed their lives, our lives.

We chose our favorites and included them in a special scrapbook lovingly made for you.

P.S.

Our friends from Merit have special gifts for the writers and the moms who inspired the scrapbook entries—they have Scrapbook sets and picture frames for preserving bonding moments with mom. If your entry was published, e-mail us your full name, contact information and address and we'll tell you how you can claim your prize.


ROGER CARPIO

Wonder Woman

By Angela V. Ignacio
2bU! Correspondent

TRES Marias

MY GRANDPA CALLS US the "Tres Marias." Our relatives have nicknamed us "The Bignacios" (and ironically so, given our oh-so-slender build).

But most people just mistakenly refer to us as "sisters." My sister and I can't really blame them, though. Looking at my mom, you'd never guess she has a daughter who's 23 and another one who's turning 20 in a few months. In fact, if I had a peso for every time someone would say to my mom, "*Ay ma'am, anak niyo po sila? Parang magkakapatid lang kayo!*", I'd probably need a piggy bank the size of Bangko Sentral.

To say that my mom looks way younger than most moms her age is an understatement. The only wrinkles she has are in the corners of her eyes when she smiles. She has naturally perfect legs that cosmetically altered women would die for. Plus, she agonizes over bulges and extra pounds when there aren't any (and doesn't believe you when you say so).

While strangers only see the physical aspect, the people close to us see her as hip and happenin' for a lot of other reasons. When she paid for my sister's tattoo for her 17th birthday, my sister's friends thought my mom was the coolest. When, during my high school years, I'd ask my mom what my curfew was and she'd say I had none, my friends all wanted her to adopt them right away. But that's not even half of it.

She goes out on gimmicks with her friends more often than I do, and it's not because I'm a self-proclaimed hermit. She knows all our boy troubles (or utter lack thereof). She listens to NU 107 and knows that Pedicab is not just a mode of transportation. We watch "Prison Break" for the same bald, hazel/green-eyed reason (and the story isn't half bad, either).

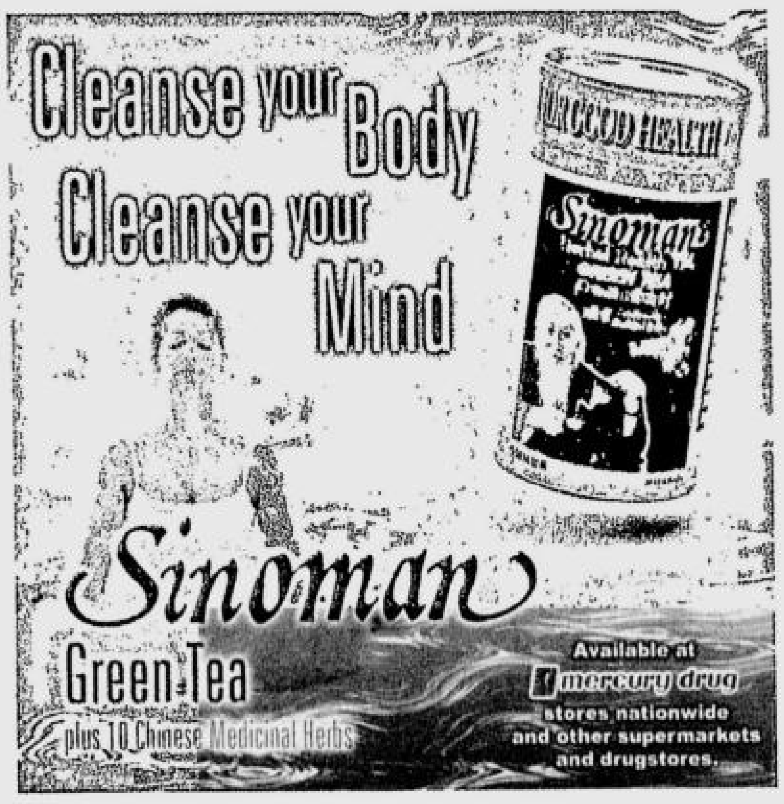
We bicker over the silliest little things, borrow clothes from each other, listen to the same music, and go guy hunting for each other (or at least we try to do it in secret).

Sometimes I'm beginning to think she's just a much older *ate* than a mom. But as chummy as our relationship is with her, we never forget that she's the one who brought us into the world and raised us to become who we are now.

Our mom has done so much for us that it's only fair that we repay her, even in our own little ways. If she feels sick, we'll take care of her. If she still wants to learn how to swim, we'll teach her. If certain people oppress her just because she's better than they are, we'll kick their behinds and fight for the credit she deserves.

She's been through a lot, and we make sure we're there for her every step of the way, just as she's always been for us. We can only hope that she's as proud of us as we are of her.

To our mother, our gorgeous *ate*, our very own Wonder Woman—thank you so much for everything. You rock!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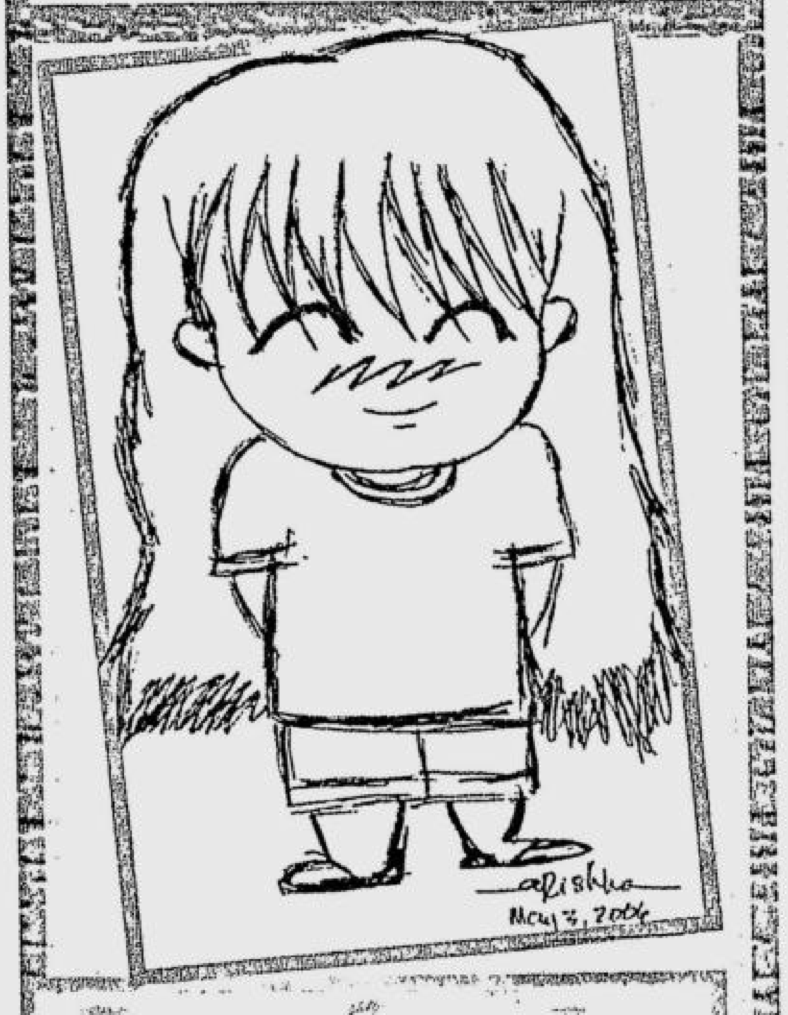
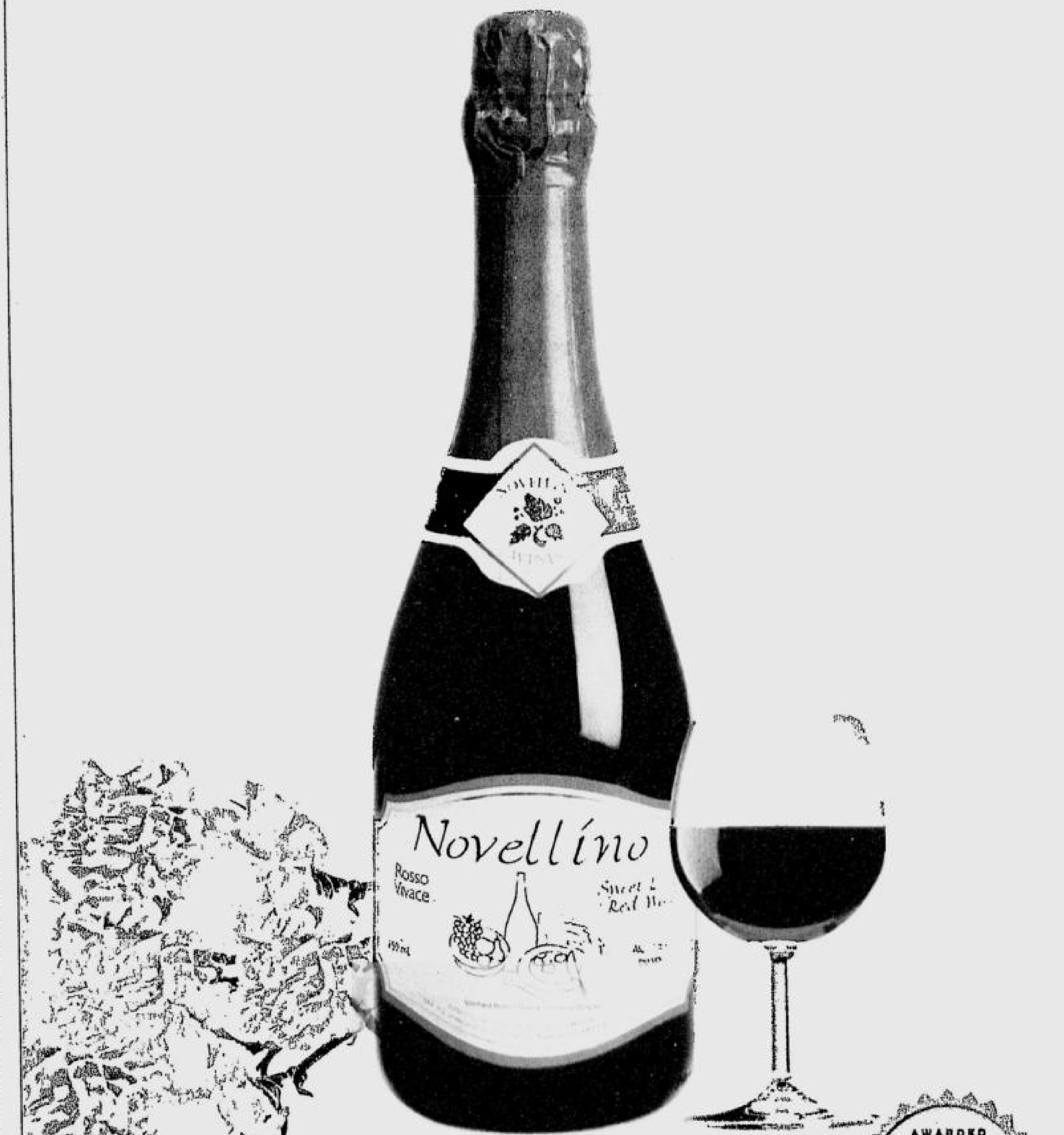


Pasasalamat

By Arishka Nicole T. Abiog
2bU! Contributor

Isang libo't isang mukha
ang nasisilayan ko bawat araw
samu't-saring mga emosyon
pag-iisa. kalungkutan. kaligayahan.
sa dami ng pagkakataong
lumuha, nadapa at nagdusa
nariyan siya, kahit buhay ay di perpekto
yumayakap at kumakalinga.
madalas nalilimutan ko
dahil nariyan ang mga kaibigan
ngunit sa tuwing nabibigo
heto siya't pilit akong binubuo
sa bawat pagkakamali
at sa kawalan ng pag-asa
ang kanyang mga ngiti
ang sa aki'y nagbibigay sigla.
malayo pa ang lalakbayin ko
ngunit pilit nyang pinagagaan
ang bawat papasanin ko.
sa aking daraanan.
higit sa lahat ng ito
siya ang dahilan ng aking buhay;
isang regalong di mapapantayan
ng kahit ano pa man.
sa iyo, aking "mama"
kulang pa ang pasasalamat.
kailanma'y di ko mahihigitan
ang iyong pagmamahal at sakripisyo.
Maligayang Araw 'ng Mga Mapagkalinga't Mapagmahal na Ina!
I Love You, Ma!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A kiss to my mom, across the miles

By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

I UNASHAMEDLY ADMIT I AM A MAMA'S boy. I have no qualms about showing my affections for her. We can have conversations about everything, even the touchiest topics. We can go out and have loads of fun doing absolutely nothing. I can hug her. Kiss her. Tell her I love her. Especially if she were here.

My Mom is in the United States, working on her papers so she can live there forever. She wants us to join her soon.

During my formative years, my mother was a huge presence, the way all mothers supposedly are. She'd help me with my assignments, dress me up for school, and introduce me to tons of books and toys. We shared so much happy times together that I'd bawl my eyeballs out whenever she had to leave for work.

And then I had a brother. And a sister.

Then all of a sudden, she packed her bags and went back to her parents' house, tagging along our little sister, but leaving me and my brother behind with our dad.

Too young to understand the complexity of the whole situation, all I came to know was that my favorite girl on earth had transferred to a different planet.

Thankfully, weekends were spent with her so all the fun moments were revived, albeit with a certain time limit. During weeknights, we'd call one another, update each other about what had happened that day and end the conversation with "goodbye, I love you."

And then acne mushroomed all over my face. I reached puberty, got sucked into school's shallow society, and my favorite girl in the world got replaced by other girls and guys. School—and all its inhabitants, politics and drama—became my life. It became my focus. I was so into it that I almost forgot my mom. Blame it on school. Blame it on the little distance between us.

And then I received a bit of news that made me want to stop school so I could be with her every day instead. She was going abroad for work. It was contractual, a couple of years or so, plus she'd get to visit us, too. There were a couple of good things that went along with it—packages, dollars, you know—but at the end of the day, I felt like it was a rotten idea.

For a little while there, I thought: How could she leave us just to earn some crisp green bills? It's not as if she couldn't get a job in the Philippines. So, yeah, there was some bit of anger and bitterness there.

So she hopped into a plane and zoomed somewhere.

The first few days were difficult, but one had to cope! I kept myself busy. Too busy, actually.

Before I knew it, she was back.

Before I knew it, she was leaving again. For another job. In another country.

Before I knew it, it had become her lifestyle, zooming in and out of our lives.

Always on my mind

So right now she's stuck in the States and, thanks to high technology, I'm missing her less. But don't get me wrong. I still miss her a lot.

When we discovered the joys of instant messaging and e-mail, we did it almost everyday. And then things came up so we ended up doing it less often. And then it turned to a weekly thingy. And now we go online monthly.

It's pretty ugly, come to think of it. But I guess we know we don't need to go online everyday just to know we're there for each other. Because we are here for one another, e-mail or no e-mail.

I have to admit there was a time when I was so busy living my life that I didn't get to even think of her for some months. And the moment I realized that, it really hurt me. Now, I make sure she's always on my mind, and that I let her know this.

Once in a while, I remember my mom and how much I miss her. Without warning, my chest gets crumpled inside and I break into tears. I have lost count but I know we've been far from one another for a very long time now. So I make sure I let her feel how much I love her—even only through forwarded, sappy e-mail or offline messages.

I love my mother much. I guess all children do. I love her for so many things.

For loving and accepting the weird child that I am.

For making me hungry for knowledge and creativity and learning.

For teaching me how to face the world, but letting me learn from my own mistakes at the same time.

There was a time when my mom was jobless. I was in college back then. Asking allowance from her was always a task, but she always managed to give me some. She even helped out her younger sister's hair accessories business just to be able to earn to give me money for school.

Every time I think of that, I melt. I feel jellylike. I work so hard right now so that I can take care of her in the future. Give her what she gave me. Give her more than she wants, needs and expects. She gave me so much, I think it's just fair for me to do the same.

Lessons

Being away from my mom has taught me loads of lessons.

It has taught me to always have a good relationship with my mother. Fights may be there, yeah, but I have also learned not to let the sun go down without us patching things up. We shouldn't hurt the ones we love, after all.

I have also been reminded that life is too short and that there should be no room for regrets. This is why I always let my mother know how much I value her. I don't want to regret not being able to say certain stuff to her. I don't want things to be too late. I don't want to regret my actions or nonaction.

I have also learned that distance shouldn't be a hindrance to a relationship. Challenges like distance should just make the relationship stronger. And challenges should just make us exert more effort.

So, if you'll excuse me now, I still have some mother-and-son relationship to work on.

E-mail the author at marksablan_2bu@yahoo.com

TO SOMEONE who has given me my life, my present and my future... Happy Mother's Day, Ma!

How to raise seven children

By Paula Tañada
2bU! Contributor

BACK IN THE OLD DAYS, having seven children and all of them delivered by Cesarean section was like, oh my gawd, you're kidding!

Saying we're seven siblings sometimes makes me feel like we qualify for the circus or "Believe It or Not!," because people tend to ask about how my parents got through it all. But telling their story makes me proud of my mom, Joy.

By the fourth child (me), my mom's doctor said that another Cesarean birth would already be life-threatening. Of course my mom made her own rules and gave birth to three more beautiful children. (Darn it, I was supposed to be the youngest).

By the seventh child, her doctor said she only had a 50-percent chance of survival. She even received the last rites from a priest. She never said it, but I think seeing all seven of her children made up for all the blood she lost in the operating room.

In my younger years, my mom was a full-time executive, but she still managed to have time for us. My clearest memories of her were that she worked a lot and there was never a day I did not see her pray for at least an hour and go to mass. I don't know exactly how to classify our growing-up lifestyle because my mom (and dad) were neither really traditional nor modern parents.

Still, most people would classify us as traditional because we were tight-knit and seemed sheltered. But the truth was, we were hardly restrained from doing what we wanted—except watching, listening to or reading "Sweet Valley High," "The Simpsons" and Madonna. Aside from those, we could (though not encouraged to) party, dress the way we wanted, smoke and drink alcohol. Despite her confusing parenting style, we turned out okay, though.

Ate (Janice), 26, turned out to be an addict for unusual sports, getting into scuba diving, mountaineering and now underwater hockey.

Kuya (Carlos), 22, is the most music-minded. He joined 10 million other bands before ending up as the lead guitarist for Up Dharma Down.

Ate Jenny, 21, likes shopping and Math (eew) and is determined to climb the corporate ladder.

Regina, 17, hopes to be a doctor someday, while dancing (literally) her way in UP Manila.

Gabby, 15, has a passion for sports and even thinks of soccer as part of his future even though his height sometimes gets in the way (hahaha).

And Raffy, 13, wants to do better in the violin and gravitates toward any computer he sees.

My mom isn't the quintessential "best friend" mom or even the traditional housewife mom. She is a little bit of everything to all of us kids. I'm really proud of her because she was able to handle all seven of us. And I have yet to figure out how she did it.

Clean living

By Marla Miniano
2bU! Correspondent

MY MOTHER HAS ALWAYS been terribly particular when it comes to cleanliness and neatness. She cringes when she sees my messy room and tells my older brother to stop smoking "because he smells."

She constantly reminds my younger sister to keep her hair out of her face, and my younger brother to keep his toys inside the cabinet. She makes sure our hands are washed before we start eating, and she hates it when we walk barefoot around the house. And don't even get me started on her serious obsession with Purinse and Wet Ones.

Of course, like normal sons and daughters, we resist, not knowing that we don't even stand a chance. A mother has a special kind of power over her children, such that it is not only inevitable that we understand where she is coming from, but we eventually find that these little quirks have actually become a part of who we are.

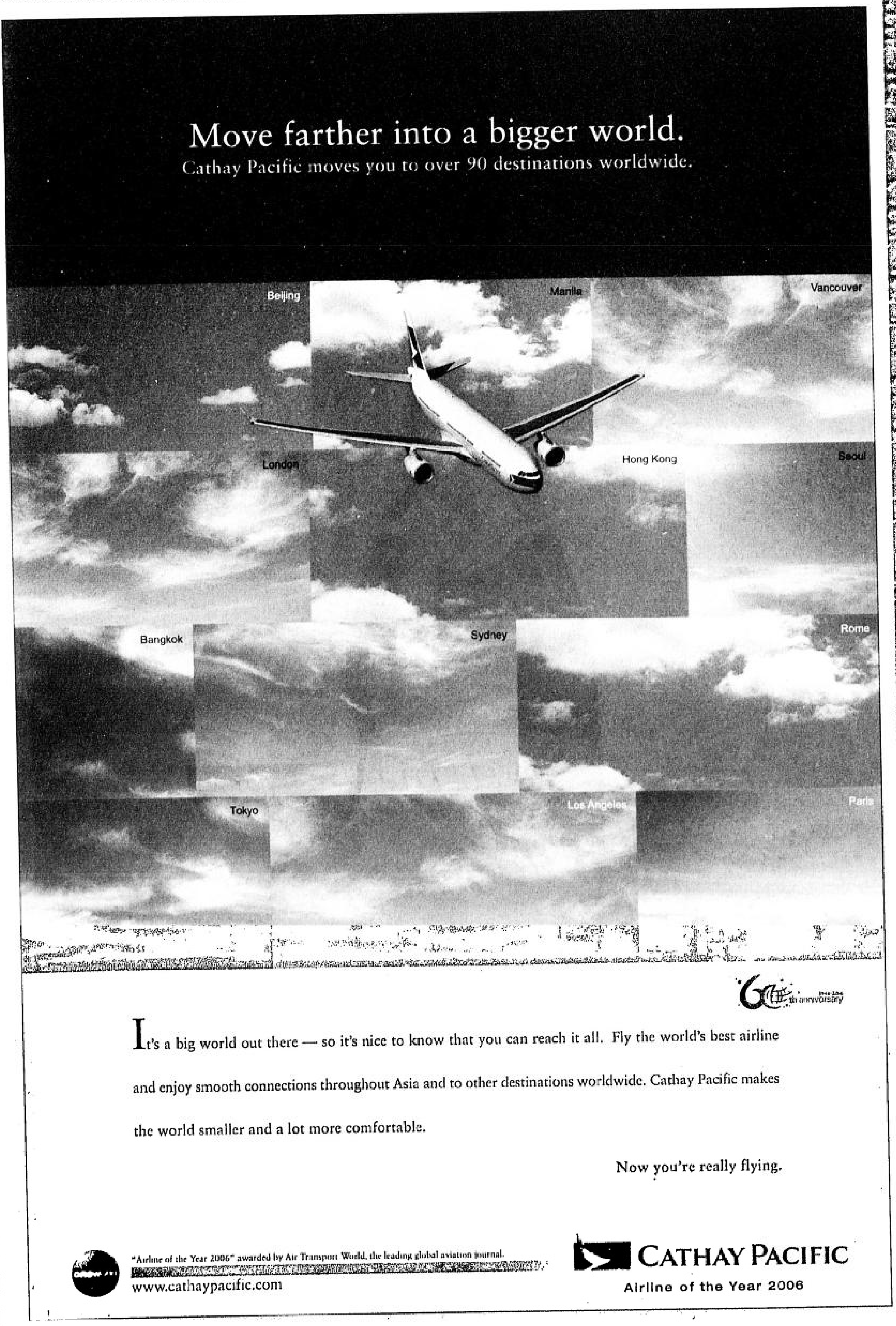
So it is not uncommon for a kid to wake up one day and realize that he has become his mother. (Oh nooo!)

So although my siblings and I are far from being as OC as our mother is, we would have to admit that she has successfully gotten to us. I would like to think that we reflect her love for cleanliness and neatness through the persons we have become: We try to keep our lives clutter-free, we try not to swear too much, we try to be honest and trustworthy, we try to keep our promises and stick to our schedules, we try to value simplicity—to be content with what we have and with each other.

Maybe this is just me, making excuses for the fact that my room still looks like a disaster area, my older brother still hasn't quit smoking, my younger sister still sports the "bruha" look, and my younger brother's toys are still strewn all over the floor.

Or maybe all moms are naturally clever like that—teaching us how to be good boys and girls just by telling us to wash our hands and wear our *tsinelas*.

Happy Mother's Day, Mommy! We love you!



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Missing my mother

By AJ Fernandez
2bUI Contributor

"Be humble."
"Don't be materialistic."
"Love your family."
"Do not be vengeful."
"Fight for the one you love."

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

MY MOTHER USED TO TELL ME these all the time. She had a hard time with me while I was growing up because I proved to be a difficult child. Her words of wisdom did not mean anything to me then, but now that I am a young adult, I finally appreciated them.

Our mother single-handedly raised my siblings and me when our father passed away in 1991. She was only 30 then, a soldier's young widow.

I knew it was very hard for her to deal with our father's death, but she was a fighter. In addition to facing the challenges of being a widow, she had to face the extra challenge of dealing with me since we did not get along well.

It was my grandmother who raised me. She doted on me. I was a spoiled brat. I saw my mother every day because our house and my grandparents' were within walking distance from each other but she was like a stranger to me. I did not know what the word "mother" meant. I only saw her as the woman who made my life miserable. She was a disciplinarian and I was a brat—not a good combination.

Since my grandparents had to move to another place when I was 10, my mother "claimed" me back. During this transition, I saw my mother in a new light. I felt that she cared for me and that she loved me. It was then that I learned what "mother" meant.

She taught me many things—how to cook rice, how to change bedcovers and pillowcases, how to properly apply floor wax, how to scrub the floor until it shone. These are simple things that delighted me and I took them all in. She was a great teacher; she patiently explained to me the details as if each chore was an art form.

As I got to know how wonderful my mother was, I learned to respect and love her. I used to joke that my love for her was not love at first sight; it developed over time, that was why it was stronger and deeper. We used to laugh at it, but I meant every word.

However, when I was in my teens, I became a rebel. No, I did not drink, smoke, tried illegal drugs or hooked up with bad peers. What I did was to stop telling her the things that mattered to her—how I was doing, what I was feeling. I built a wall around myself.

They say it is a phase that teenagers go through; it is normal. I wish it did not happen.

Heart attack

Then she had a stroke. That was my wake-up call. I regretted the times I treated her badly. I vowed never to hurt her again. I wanted to give her all the love I could.

I tightly embraced my mother when I saw her at the hospital. I did not want to let go. I was very scared that day. I feared that I would be losing her soon.

My mom had temporary paralysis and for weeks, maybe months, she was not able to move her left arm. She underwent therapy.

I was going through her things the other day and I saw the beautiful green balls that she practiced on to strengthen the grip on her left hand (she lost it when she had the stroke). One of her friends gave her the balls. They were made of metal but were covered with a glass-like material.

They were also designed with stars and produced a chime-like sound when rolled. When I saw the balls the other day, I noticed that one had a chip on it. I could not help myself so I cried, thinking she might have dropped it as she struggled during her therapy.

When she was strong enough to walk, she exercised every day. She walked around the house in her Nike shoes. I thought that was funny and sad at the same time. It was funny because she could go from one end of the house to another in 22 steps (yes, I counted them). It was sad because every time she walked, I was reminded of her suffering.

After the stroke, she walked differently. I often told her that she walked with a bounce. We would laugh, but behind our laughter was the fear of what might happen when she suffers another attack.

In spite of what happened, she was very cheerful; she was thankful that God gave her a chance.

Aside from the superficial changes in my mother, other things have changed. Weekly, she sent groceries to Baguio for my sister and me. She did not use to do that.

We checked on each other every day. I remember when I told her I was depressed. I was having another bout of identity crisis then. I wanted to tell my mother about it because I needed her strength for me to get through. After her stroke, we clung to each other as if we were each other's lifelines.

I was having fun at school (it was University Week) when I got a call from my grandmother. I did not understand a word she said because she was sobbing, but I knew it was about my mother. I cried right there at the lobby, in front of the whole school. I did not care. My mother was dead.

What I felt must have been similar to what my mother felt when my father passed away. The pain of losing the person you love most was indescribable and indefinable. But my mother was a strong woman. She tackled parenthood on her own no matter the challenges. When she passed away, I found myself in the same situation she found herself in when my father died.

Now I have to take care of my younger siblings. It is a tough job, I know, but it is no tougher than I am. My mother has taught me to be strong in circumstances such as this. "Have faith in God," she had told me.

My mother may not have lived long, but the 43 years she spent here on earth were well-lived. She was a good person. She showered the people she cared for with love and affection. It was no wonder that one of her favorite songs was James Taylor's "Shower the People." When she loved, she did not hold back; she gave everything.

Happy Mother's Day, Nanay.

> She was a disciplinarian and I was a spoiled brat—not a good combination

My guardian angel

By Amy

A WOMAN OF POISE AND SOPHISTICATION, I assure you my mother is not.

In fact, she can be quite the extreme.

A perennial "servant" in the kitchen, she polices your almost every move, always ready to remind you of what dessert is available when you're done with the main course.

A driver she is not.

In spite of this, she is forever obsessing about automobile matters such as parking, car keys and insurance.

Because of life's never-ending difficulties, she sees the world as a half-empty glass.

Thus, her occasional outbursts of craziness do not come as a surprise.

In spite of my list of "complaints" about her, I can't help but go back to her and be by her side at the end of the day.

When I was hospitalized twice, she was the only person who was with me the whole time.

She is the one person I love the most.

She is my guardian angel, my best friend, she is my one and only mom.

Happy Mother's Day, Anita!
From your daughter Amy

Woman

By Freda

Celebrate your beauty
and feel the wind
that propels you
to impossible goals
Stand on tiptoes
flitting and dancing
from cloud to cloud
on wondrous thoughts
Explore your mind
and find within
the joys of
your soul's priceless treasures
Celebrate your beauty
and be not ashamed
You are woman.
Mother of Earth.
Giver of life.
Celebrate. And be known.

Healing

From page C4

ness from her. We told her it was okay if she wanted to sleep and rest and we'd just be there by her side. She fell asleep less than five minutes after we told her that which was amazing because she hadn't been able to sleep well the past weeks. It was like she was just waiting for us to tell her it was all right to go.

Mom passed away peacefully in my arms at 9:02 p.m., Sunday, May 29, 2005, surrounded by her family. For that I am very thankful. She didn't suffer in the end. She just slept and never woke up. It was the way she wanted to go.

Strongest person

May 5, 2006. My mother was the strongest person I've known in my lifetime. From the moment we learned that she had breast cancer in 1997, she was pillar of strength.

After her mastectomy, she was on remission for four years. Had she gone five years without recurrence, it meant her chances of being cancer-free were in the upper 90 percent.

But two months before the fifth year, mom had a recurrence. She underwent three cycles of chemotherapy and 38 days of radiation therapy. It was three months of excruciating pain, with bouts of nausea, extreme exhaustion and appetite loss. She lost at least 20 pounds during that period, which she regained after the sessions.

Mom was in remission again for two years, but the cancer was stubborn and she underwent another six cycles of chemotherapy and 30 days of radiation therapy.

Mom was cancer-free for a year, but needed another round of chemotherapy because the cancer metastasized to her other breast. There were also indications that it had spread to other parts of her body, like the back of her skull and the lower right part of her lung. That meant she needed another cycle of high-dose chemotherapy.

Anyone who could endure three cycles of chemotherapy and do it again for another 12 cycles is not only strong physically, but mentally.

She was also going to work on the periods between chemo sessions, even if she didn't need to. She wanted to go to work to take her mind off the cancer, because she said that when her mind was idle, it just gave her time to think about it.

Beautiful person

I wanted to pay tribute to my mother, Divine Sales, not only because she was a pillar of strength, but also because she was the most supportive, loving best friend, wife, mother, shopping partner, cook, therapist and all-around beautiful person I have ever known.

I miss everything about her, her laughter, her smile, her voice, her cooking, the hugs and kisses, the way she smelled, the girl talk we had before going to bed every night, how she got excited planning our Christmas reunions and summer outings. I miss our shopping sprees, our food tripping, and the talks we used to have in the car, on the way home from work. I miss everything. Yes, even the sermons I used to get when I screwed up, and how she would hugged me right after.

My mom and I may not have had the perfect mother-daughter relationship, but I wouldn't trade her for anyone in the world. We used to have our fights because I was stubborn and we were so alike that we tended to clash, but we had the greatest time together.

I came to know her better when I accompanied her to all her doctor's appointments, chemotherapy and radiation sessions and lab tests. I came to see mom as a woman and not just as a mother. I knew her fears and I admired her more when she confronted those fears head on.

It's been almost a year since she passed away and not a day goes by when I don't think about her. A lot has changed, my siblings and I grew up a lot and I know my dad misses her every day. We've had challenges and I know there's more to come, but now that we have our own guardian angel guiding us, everything will be all right.

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Healing

By Jennie Sales

JUNE 17, 2005. IT'S BEEN ALMOST three weeks since mom passed away and I still can't fully express what I feel. Let me rephrase that. I know what I want to say, but it's all jumbled up in my head. I can't find the right words. There's just too much going on inside.

Mom's passing was bittersweet. We're grieving her loss but at the same time we are happy because she feels no more pain, her suffering has ended and she's now in a better place.

No matter how many times I tell myself that she's in a better place, it doesn't completely fill the void she left in my heart. I do know that one day the pain will go away and I won't have to cry myself to sleep. It has to end, because I know she wouldn't want me to be like that. I have lots of wonderful memories of mom that will last me a lifetime, but there's nothing better than having her right here with us.

I admit it's hard not having mom around. We've been so used to having her here in every aspect of our lives, that we greatly feel her loss. Even during the times her body was weak, her mind and spirit were at their finest.

My responsibilities have naturally broadened since I'm the eldest, which sometimes make me feel like I'm the mom now. But no matter how hard the task seems to be, I will try my best to live up to mom's expectations. After all, she taught us well. She prepared us for the eventuality of her loss, although even if we seemed like the best prepared persons around, when that time comes, no one really is.

Cathartic

I remember her telling us to let her go, when her vitals started getting tachy. I was the one who asked if I could talk to the doctor because I had a feeling that mom's condition was deteriorating and I wanted to know what our options were.

The first doctor I talked to was the kidney doctor, who told me mom's blood gases were very high and we should think about getting her dialyzed within the next few days. I was surprised because mom was admitted for having fluid in her lungs (which had already been drained) and here was this doctor telling me she needed a dialysis.

I immediately said no to the dialysis, even if I hadn't asked my dad and my siblings. I don't want to put her through any more pain and I knew that mom wouldn't want it, too. The doctor said they were going to give her medicines to try to lessen the blood gases in mom's body, but the effects would only be temporary.

When I got inside the room, my sister and mom's sisters *Nanay* Lita and *Tita* Belle surrounded mom, and she was calling out our deceased grandparents' names. She had a very beautiful smile on her face, her aura was different and I couldn't see a hint of the pain and discomfort I knew she felt before I left the room. She waved her hands, smiled and called out the name of our uncle, *Nanay*'s husband, who passed away last year.

Around 6 p.m., mom's heartbeat became erratic and her oxygen levels dropped further. At the same time, the nurses had difficulty getting her blood pressure. It was then that we felt mom's time was almost up. My dad, my siblings and I surrounded her bed and told her everything we ever wanted to tell her. She couldn't speak because of her oxygen mask, but we communicated with gestures, loving looks and kisses.

My sister and I alternated sitting in bed with mom, her head nestled on our shoulders, while dad and my brother held her hands. We told her it was okay to leave, because we know how much she has suffered from this sickness. We would miss her but we'd be fine because we knew she'd be our angel.

The moment we told her that, I felt calm

HEALING/ C3

> Mom's passing was bittersweet. We're grieving her loss but we're also happy because she feels no more pain

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For details, shoppers may inquire at the Customer Service Counters of the SM Metro Manila branches where they purchased their gifts.

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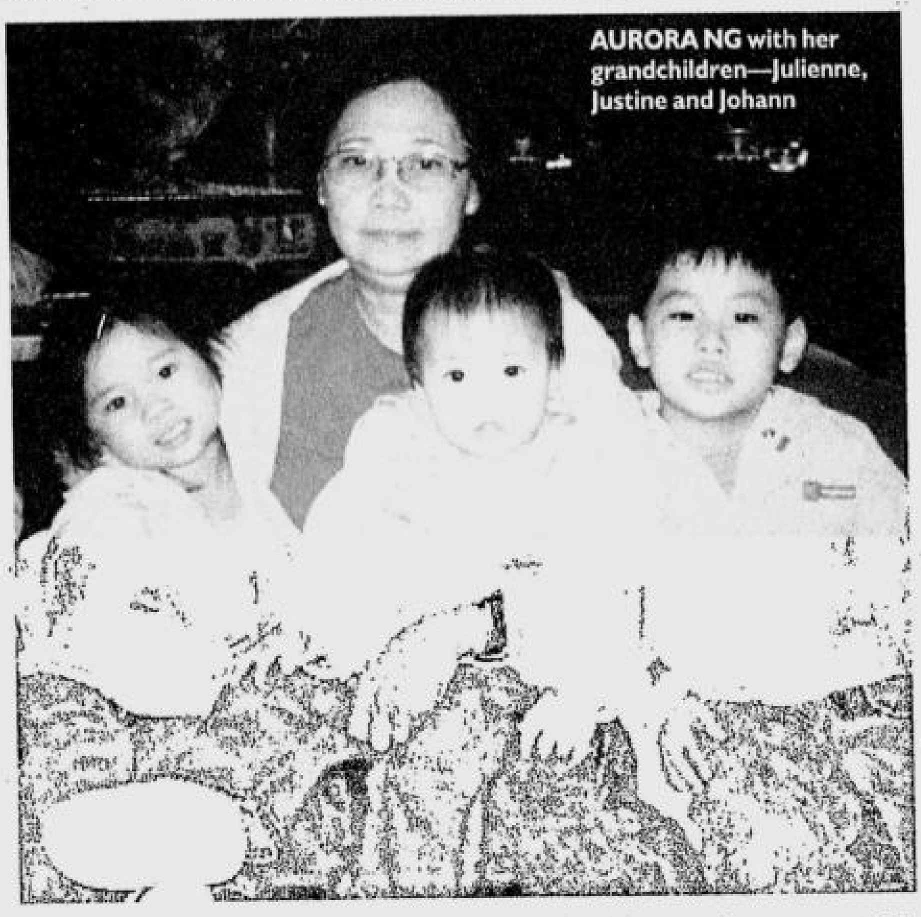
Mother and martyr



AURORA NG with her grandchildren—Julienne, Justine and Johann

By Jeanette
2bU! Contributor

DEAR MOMMY,

I've heard people say you're so lucky, having raised two fine daughters (me included) who have turned out so well.

Jo and I both enjoy thriving careers, are married with beautiful children and lead comfortable lives. But now that I'm a mother myself, I'd say luck has nothing to do with it.

Being a mom is hard work. You're on call 24 hours a day and your family expects you to be able to do anything and everything, from solving mathematical equations to sewing buttons to fixing the broken sink.

Looking back, I don't think we adequately showed our appreciation, and while I have been trying to correct this in recent years, I know I still have a long way to go. I'm hoping this letter will help make up for my shortcomings.

So thank you, thank you, thank you—for being the mother that I can only hope to be. When I look back at all the wonderful things that have happened to me, I have to say that you deserve most, if not all the credit.

Someday, when my Julienne and Justine become mothers, I can only pray they will look at me with a tenth of the love and respect I have for you.

Where does motherhood end and martyrdom begin? I wouldn't know, because in your case the lines are completely blurred.

Happy Mother's Day!

Never alone

By Gmeleen Faye B. Tomboc
2bU! Correspondent

I NEVER REALIZED HOW IMPORtant my mom was until I went off to college. Sure, I appreciated that she was always there to go up on stage and pin ribbons on me during school recognition rites, and to applaud me whenever I acted in school plays.

But I was 16 years old and dead-set on living in a dormitory to escape curfews and the never-ending remarks about my messy room.

One week into college, I realized it was not quite the bed of roses I had imagined. But whenever I ran into these difficult times, I always knew where to go. I'd pack my bags and head home for the weekend.

Home was where my mom, dad and sister welcomed me with hugs and kisses, the smell of my favorite meals wafting from the kitchen where my mom had been cooking for hours.

When I took higher studies, things were more difficult. My weekend visits became less frequent, and the schoolwork was infinitely more demanding. On one such particularly depressing day, I failed an exam, burned the rice I was cooking, and noticed that my hair had started thinning out from all that stress.

You might call my problems frivolous, but I had never felt so alone in my life, sitting in that dorm room and feeling as if it was me against the world. I don't know exactly how it happened, but suddenly I realized I didn't have to face all my problems alone. I couldn't run home the way I could always do so when I was a kid, but why was I wallowing in my sorrows when my family was just a bus ride or a phone call away?

And so with the wonders of technology, I sent an SMS to my mom telling her about my day. She immediately sent over virgin coconut oil to treat my hair, as if she had just been waiting for me, all these months, to ask for any kind of help.

You might call it trifling, but it was that moment when I realized I had never been, and will never be, alone. From the moment I was born, I had a mother who loved me no matter how I looked or how much I had kept her up waiting for me to come home from a late night out.

There is always a place where I will be loved not for anything that I have done, but simply for the mere fact that I was born to her, and that place is a mother's heart.

From then on, I would ask her to ring me up on the morning of a major exam just in case I wouldn't be awakened by my alarm clock, and I began to look forward to sitting down with her for midnight snacks, talking to her about my worst fears and my fondest wishes.

In a few months, I'll be starting out in the real world. I'll be paying my own bills and saving up for my own future. But I know that no matter how much I think I can take care of myself, nothing can ever replace my mom's tender touch in rubbing Vicks Vaporub on me and tucking me into bed.

The ribbons she pinned on me may now be gone, but my mom deserves every accolade in the world. I may not have an award to pin on her, and there is no stage for her to come up to. But on this Mother's Day, I applaud her for welcoming me into her life and for loving me unconditionally, the way only a mother can.

Psychic mom

By Pam Pastor

MY MOTHER SENT ME THIS TEXT message:

"Before you were born, *napanaginipan kita na* toddler *ka*. When you became a toddler, you looked exactly like you did in my dreams."

Then, after having dinner with her, the first dinner in a long time, she sent this message:

"Forgot to tell you that I dreamt about you the other day. In my dream, you looked exactly like you did today, even your hair and the color of your skin."

My mother isn't psychic, or at least I'm not aware of it. Scratch that, maybe she is psychic when it comes to her kids.

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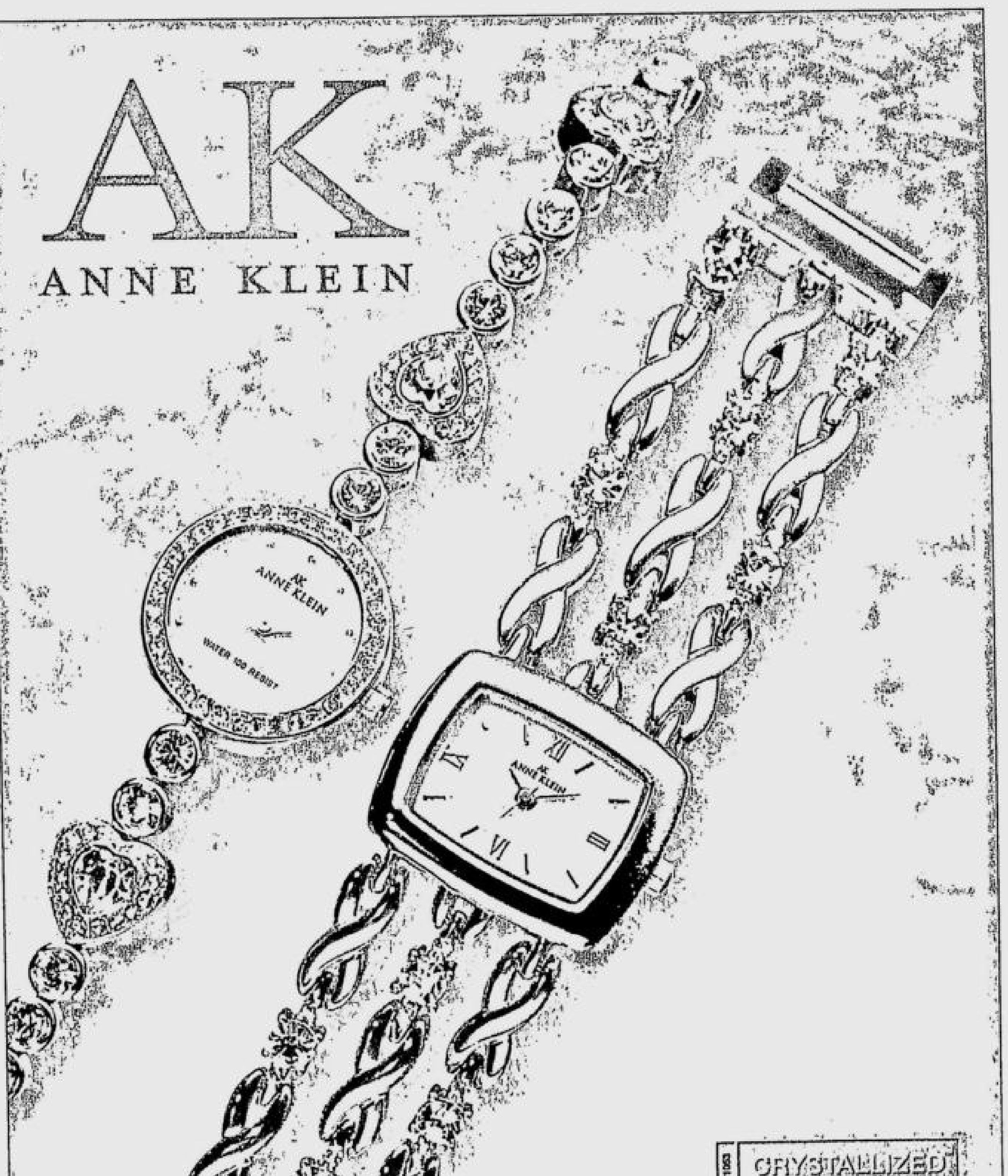

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IT ALWAYS amazes me when Pam picks up our babies when they are crying. In an instant, they stop and coo. Maybe it's the thought of breast milk, maybe it's the nine months they'd spent together, or maybe it's simply the magic that mommies have over babies (and daddies!). Happy Mother's Day, Pam! —from Tonton, Julia, Audrey and Lexi

Coming-out letter on Mother's Day

By Danicar Mariano
2bU! Correspondent

MY MOM MUST HAVE BEEN SHOCKED. But, as I explain to my friends, my lesbianism is not caused by any failure on her part. In fact, she has taught me to appreciate women all the more—for their patience, compassion, resilience, diligence and wisdom. Not to forget their immense capacity to love.

All of these traits converge in a woman who is aging so beautifully, knowing when and how to laugh at herself and let that which does not matter truly slide. Do all people feel their mom to be the most saintly woman they know?

Even though my mom constantly voices out her concern about my choices, ever fearful I would get hurt or that I would regret them, I know she knows, deep inside, that it's her selfsame idealism and generosity that drives me. And that is why I cannot help but live up to it. That is why I am fighting for the right to love, the only way she taught me how—freely, bravely and in full faith.

I wrote and gave this letter to my mom two years ago when I came out to her as a gay and lesbian rights advocate. It happened on the eve of Mother's Day. I guess it happened to remind me to never underestimate a mother's capacity to love and accept her child, no matter how angry or confused they might be at first.

The week before the incident, I had been disguising the lesbian conference I was attending as "some human rights conference." With this information, my mom just gave a quizzical look. "What for?" she asked. "We're giving you your rights, aren't we? Charity begins at home, you know."

In my mind, telling them it was a "human rights" conference wasn't really lying as it wasn't really far from the truth. Gay and lesbians rights, after all, are human rights. And yet something in me wanted to be more self-revealing, and wondered what would happen if she found out that I was really going to an an crimination conference for lesbians, gays, uals and transgenders.

But because of her superhuman intuitio discovered materials in connection wit Lesbian Advocates Philippines in my p sion. And unlike the time she first got a h my sexual orientation when I was 12, I wa pared for the confrontation this time.

My mom showed me the material and me what it meant. "*Sasali ka don?*" My grew cold as it does in preparation for co like an anesthesia before an operation. M moved automatically as if it couldn't deny thing

"Mm" was all I could manage to mumbl

"So *parang* proud *ka pa doon!*" she said ly.

"*Oo*," I told her boldly.

Then she started crying, "*Pinaparusahan ako ng Diyos.*"

"Maaa, *bakit naman po?*"

The three queen

By Pam Pastor

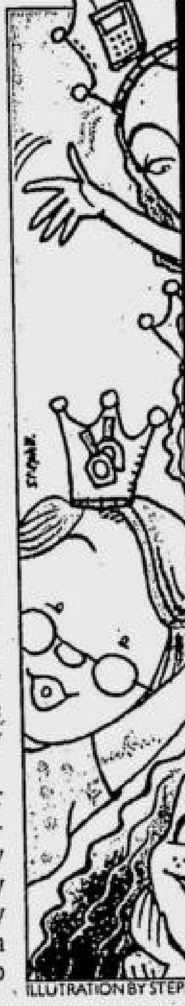


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH

THREE WOMEN WERE present the day I was born. They didn't follow a star, they were already there, just like they always are.

I didn't know it then, but they had gifts for me.

My mother gave me my love for people, my passion for music, my flair for drama, my need to make sure no one around me is hungry, my insomnia, my disdain for ugly words, my bargain-hunting skills, my fixation on manners (I feel like reaching over when people fail to put their cutlery side by side on their plates after eating), my tendencies for great attachment and even greater affection, my ability to tell stories, my inability to put the phone down, my temper and my talkativeness.

My maternal grandmother gave me the desire to give until I have none and to buy something for everyone, my constant quest for peace, my sense of humor, my aversion to germs (I learned how to

A love like no o

By Ana Patricia Barbacena-Sawit
2bU! Contributor

THE LONG LAZY SUMMER AFTERNOON beckoned me to start cleaning my cabinet and empty the drawers in my bureau. I guess it was timely that I found a yellow-eared envelope containing what I think is the most precious letter I have ever kept.

I would like to share it with you as a tribute to my mother who, in her life, was the word "love" personified. Although it was never sent (thank God!), the letter is a clear indication of how far a mother would go to give her children the best things in life.

April 3, 1993

"Dear Editor:

"It was probably Divine Providence that led me to read your April 1 column today, Saturday, about that mother who wished to sell her kidney. It is one bright idea I have been looking for but which has evaded me this past few months.

"Editor, I too want to sell one of my kidneys. If only I can function with one lung, I can sell it, too! I find this as the one final solution that can end my woes. I thought it would help bail me out of the rut I am in. At least this is better than selling my soul to Satan—my heart and my conscience say so.

"My husband lost his job at the US Embassy when the Americans left Clark Air Base last year. And since he is already 50 years old, he finds it terribly hard to find another job.

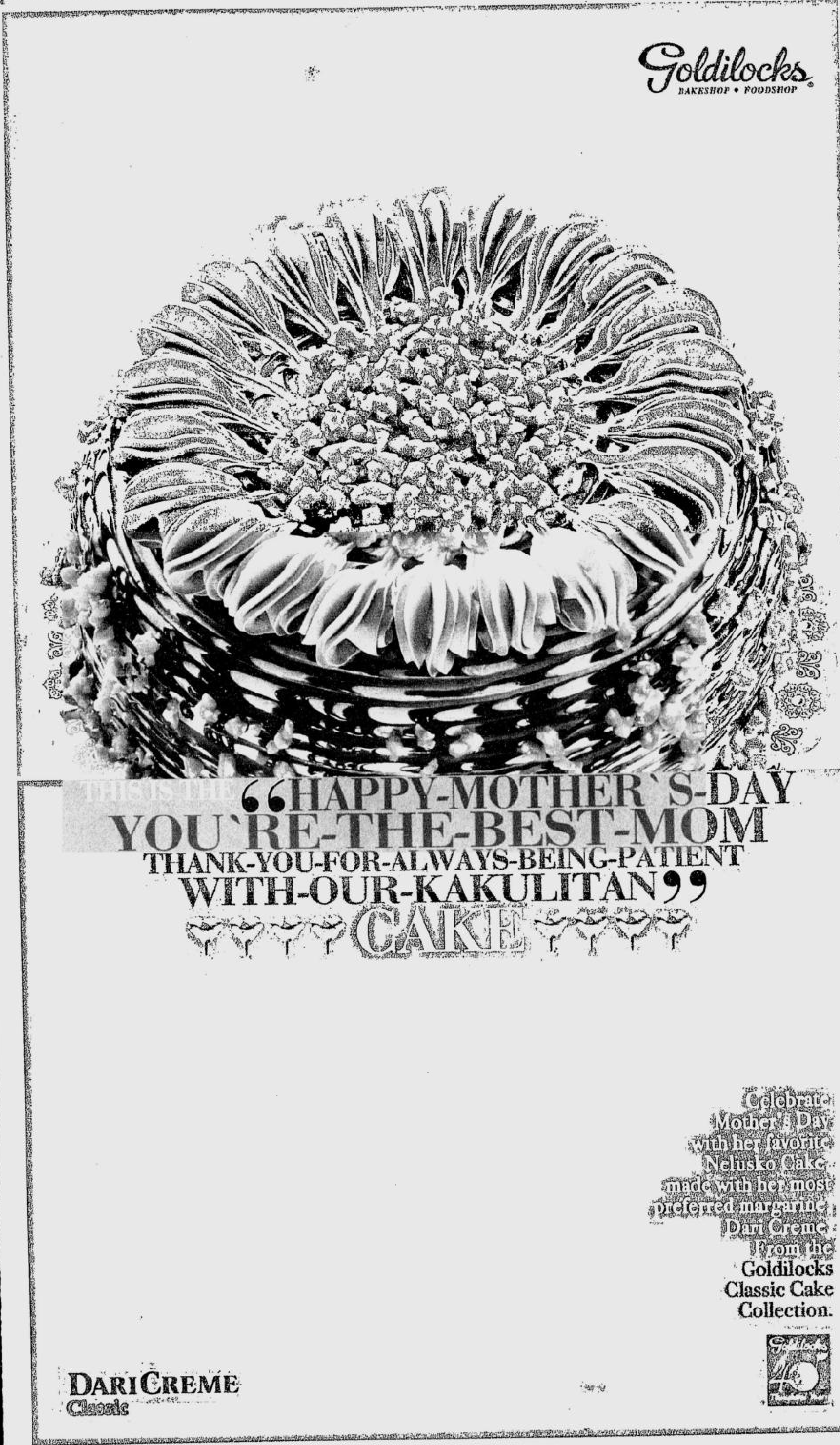
"I am sending my five children (ages ranging from 6 to 19) to school this June. This means that I have to raise about P30,000-P40,000 for the partial payment. (Three of them at St. Scholastica's College, the youngest at St. Paul's and the eldest at UST).

"But that is not all. I also need a little something which I can use as equity for a motor vehicle loan I am taking from our Provident Fund to purchase an AUV to be used as a school bus. This calls for another P50,000. Do you think one of my kidneys can be sold for P80,000?

"I am a healthy person. I don't drink or smoke. I have no heart ailment. Except for an appendectomy, I have never been hospitalized for any ailment minor or major. I shall be very willing to undergo preliminary physical examinations even at my expense if only to be able to present evidence of my fitness.

"I know you must be saying by now, 'Life has really gotten that bad with this family.' I say 'Amen.'"

I will never forget the way my mom looked at me when she showed me the letter. She was asking for my opinion whether she should send it. Her voice sounded brave and determined, like a soldier gearing up for battle. But her eyes were saying a different thing. They were almost pleading that I say no, and for a moment, my mom looked like a helpless child. I had never seen my mother look at me like that.



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I hugged her for a long time as she sobbed some more. Afterward, I gave her some space and didn't talk to her for the rest of the night. In the morning, I left her this letter.

From the heart

Dear Ma,

Please trust me. I know what I am doing with my life. It may take me a long time to decide and I may do it in ways different from what others do, but that is precisely what should make you believe that I am doing it right. Because I am doing it in my own honest-to-goodness way. No one else can do it for me and no one else can do it but me.

Yes, you have raised me well enough to know that. And you have loved me so much that I cannot be anything but proud of myself. You raised me with so much dignity that I cannot ask for anything but respect from others for who I am—your child.

Please do not say you are being punished. I know it is difficult. It was difficult for me to accept, too, but now I am nothing but grateful and glad that this is what God made me. S/He made me uniquely who I am for a reason and I know that my only mission in life is to be that person—the person which S/He has both made me and that which S/He wants me to become. I do everything toward that end.

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Even if you've raised us in comfort and luxury, I'm willing to go through hardship. I'm not afraid to suffer or encounter opposition. You see, I've inherited your bravery. I don't let anyone think or speak or live for me. The only way I see living is to live it proudly, despite all odds. I hope you, of all people, should understand because that, precisely, is your legacy to me. For that, Ma, I am nothing but grateful.

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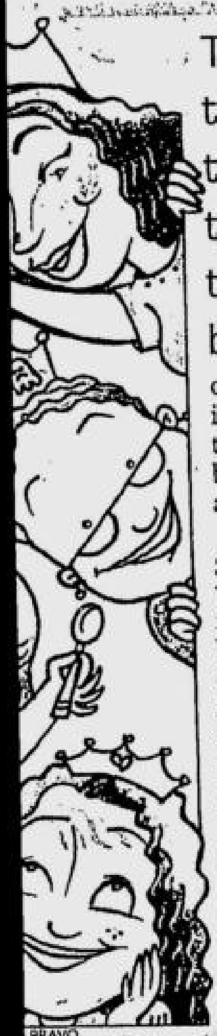
BRAVO

They didn't need to follow a star, they were already there, just like they've always been

open toilet doors without using my newly washed hands), the hope that good men with beautiful hearts still roam around (she did find my *lolo*).

My paternal grandmother gifted me with my zeal for words, my fascination with food, my love affair with books, my need for independence, my dependence on manicures and pedicures, my strength, my indecisiveness, my love for justice and fair play.

They're not gold, frankincense or myrrh. But they are great gifts that I will carry for the rest of my life.

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My dad passed away July 23, 1996, due to complications from a heart disease. The pain of losing him and the plethora of regrets is another story in itself. Something that would merit a different letter and tribute to a man whose faith in the Lord never waned up to the end.

After being diagnosed with leukemia in Jan. 2, 1998, my mother passed away, too, exactly one year to the day she was diagnosed. My sisters and I were devastated. It was like someone had taken the wind out of our systems. But we couldn't grieve. We had to be strong for each other.

Being the eldest (I was 26 then and had a family of my own) I was left to care for my sisters, the youngest at 12 years old.

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To all those who still have their mothers around, please give them a hug and tell them that you love them. Life is so short and mysterious you'll never know if this day would be your last. And death is always too quick and sudden. No matter how much you think a lingering illness, a well-researched disease or some expert advice might have prepared you for death, when it happens to someone you love you are always caught unaware.

Mother's Day will be around soon, and the best gift you can give your moms is to let them know how much you love them and appreciate the things they do. As a mother myself, my heart flutters every time my sons kiss me and give me hugs. My heart sings when they text me that they miss and love me.

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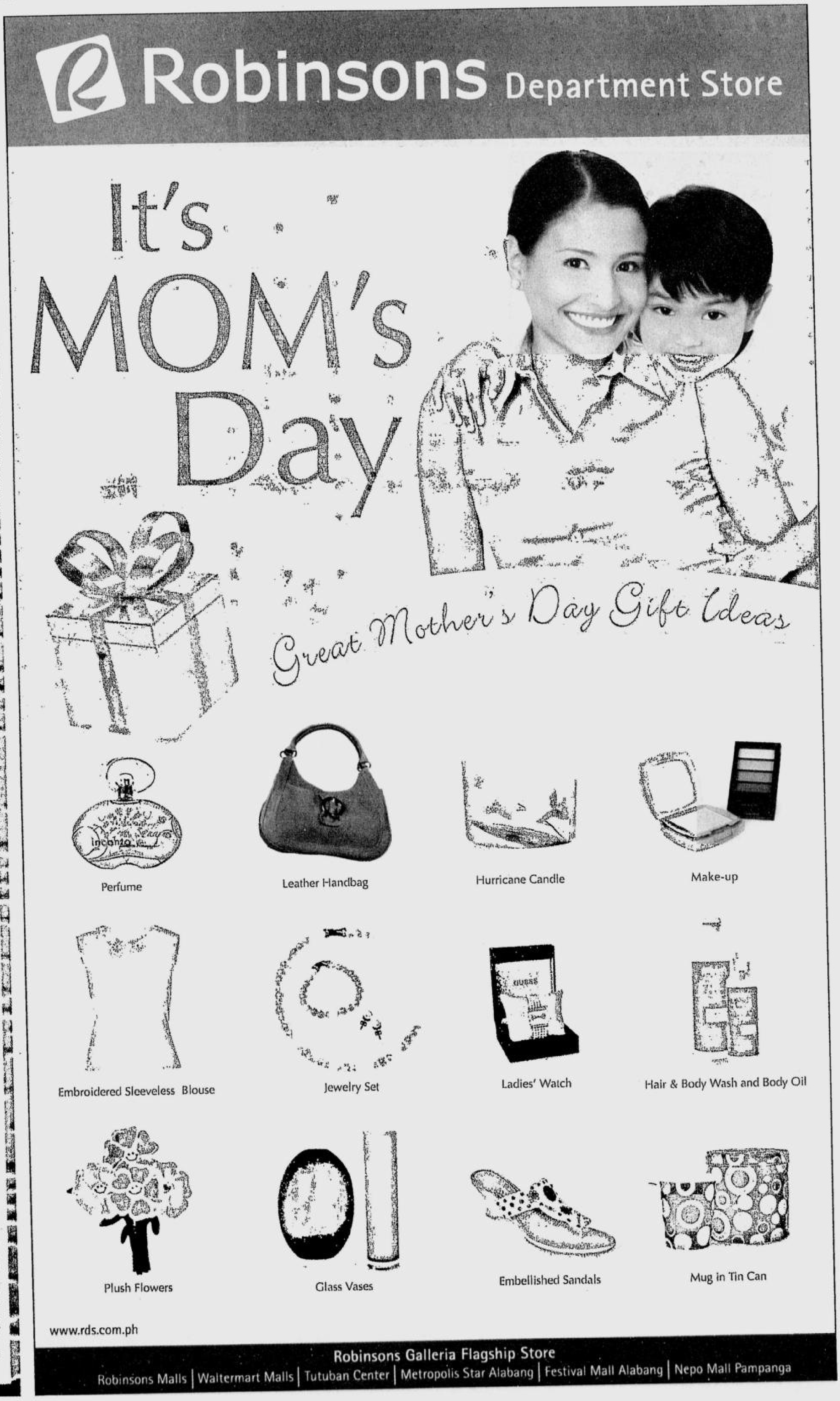

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I hugged her for a long time as she sobbed some more. Afterward, I gave her some space and didn't talk to her for the rest of the night. In the morning, I left her this letter.

From the heart

Dear Ma,

Please trust me. I know what I am doing with my life. It may take me a long time to decide and I may do it in ways different from what others do, but that is precisely what should make you believe that I am doing it right. Because I am doing it in my own honest-to-goodness way. No one else can do it for me and no one else can do it but me.

Yes, you have raised me well enough to know that. And you have loved me so much that I cannot be anything but proud of myself. You raised me with so much dignity that I cannot ask for anything but respect from others for who I am—your child.

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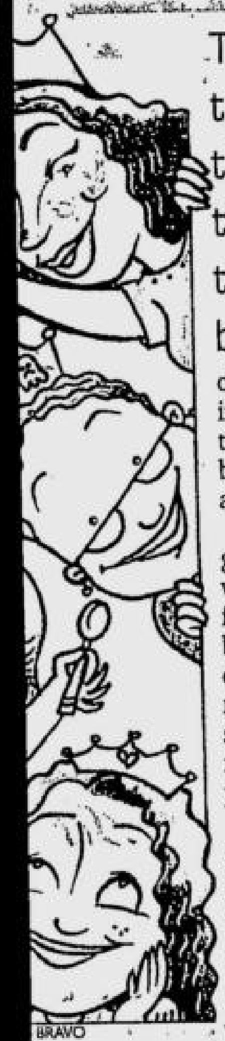

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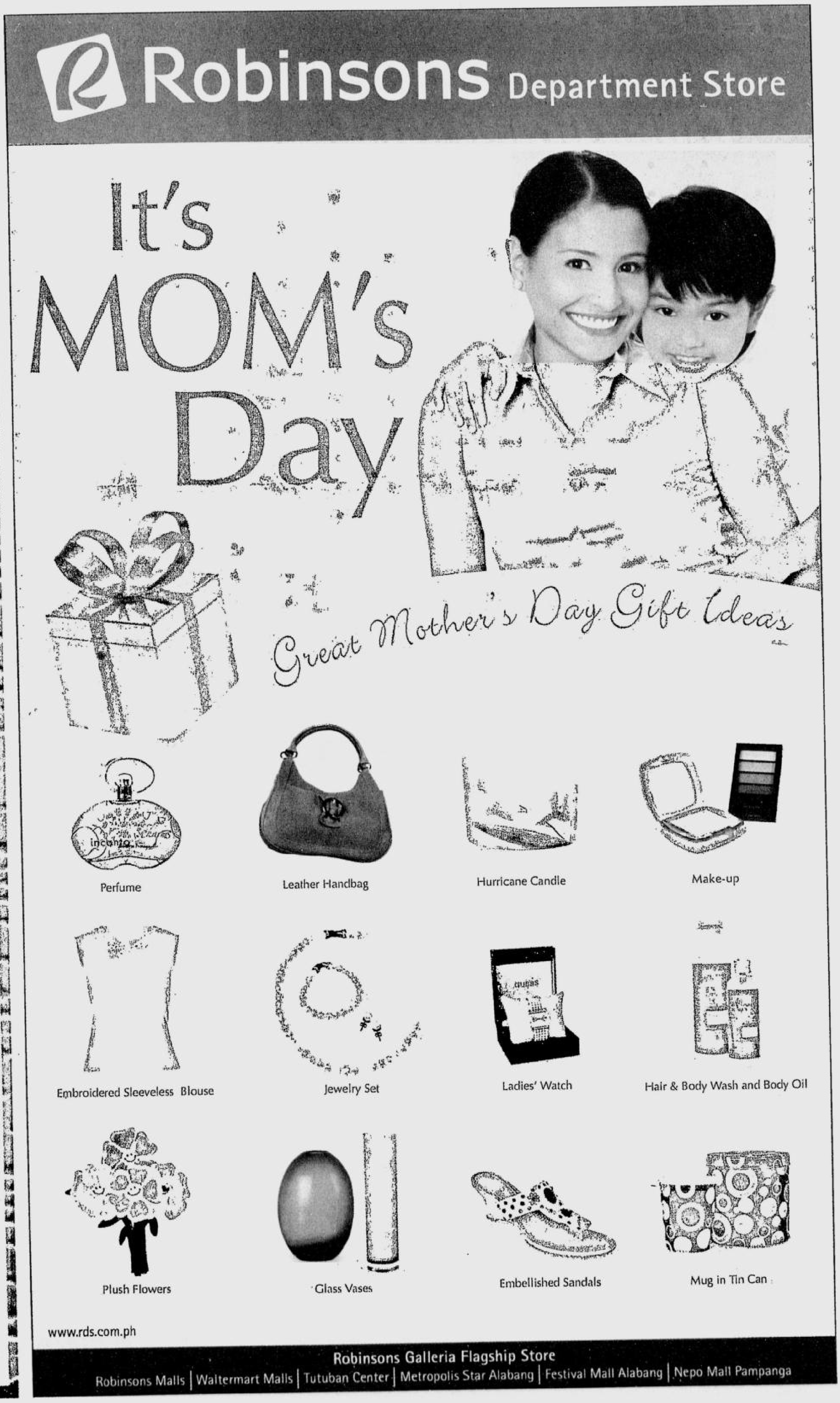
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Confessions of a frustrated runaway

By Zara Q.
2bU! Contributor

> Running away will just prove I'm not the model daughter I've always prided myself to be

I HAVE LOTS OF REASONS TO RUN AWAY from home, and my mother is on top of the list.

She always gets on my nerves, probably much like the way I get on hers. So, it's no surprise that we butt heads more often than not. When I was a kid, a fight between my mother and me usually meant she'd be blowing off an infinite amount of steam, and I'd be in a corner trying very hard not to cry.

But as I grew up, the one-sided scolding sessions gradually turned into two-way shouting matches, complete with angry waterworks and all that melodrama. She could be pretty unreasonable and get mad over the most trivial things, and I'd start to feel the need to defend myself. I'm not proud of it, but there were times when I simply couldn't take it anymore.

After every fight, I would wonder what I'd done or didn't do for her to treat me this way. I'm smart, talented, well-liked and well-rounded. I have no vices, nor have I done anything to make her ashamed of me. I excel in practically anything and everything I do. Modesty aside, most parents would be contented to have a kid like me.

But not my mother. She's never quite satisfied. She always manages to find something to scold me for, even though I've done so many things she claims she's proud of. And whenever that happens, she never fails to make me feel like I'm not doing enough.

Oftentimes, the stress at home gets so bad that I feel like I'm nothing but a big burden to her, financially and emotionally. Don't get me wrong. I try my hardest not to be. But whenever she's in a bad mood, she goes on and on about how much she's sacrificed for me, and she makes sure I never forget it.

She may be right, but the thing is, I'm being reminded about it much too often that sometimes I'm literally beginning to wish I'd never been born.

It doesn't take much to please her, but it doesn't take much to disappoint her, either. It gets to a point that I just don't know what to do anymore. This is when the idea of running away becomes the sanest option for me.

I think it'd be easier for her if I just left. Less expenses, less tension, therefore less headaches. But something always stops me from packing my bags. My stubborn pride prefers to think it's more of a financial reason than anything else. I have no money, no job and no place to go to (well, none where I can't be tracked down sooner or later, anyway).

But my heart knows what the real reason is, and it's only during this one special day every year that I overcome my pride and accept that reason for what it is.

Despite the frequent emotional outbursts, I know that my mother loves me with her whole heart. All those times she had called me selfish and I had believed her to be totally wrong, I realize now that she's been right all along. If I go ahead with my plan, I'll be running away not from my mother, but from my own feelings of guilt, from the problems I'm supposed to face head on. Running away will just prove that I'm not the model daughter I've always prided myself to be.

My mother never means to hurt me or make me feel bad about myself. This special occasion reminds me that she just wants me to be everything I can be, because she believes in me. She's given up so much, yet I've given her so little in return. The least I can do is to prove to her, to myself and to everyone else that I'm worth all the trouble she's gone through in raising me.

Sure, we may fight and say hurtful words to each other, but I know we'll eventually work things out. After all, we always do.

I still have lots of reasons to run away, and I can probably think of more. But I have just one reason not to do so, and in the end, it's always enough to make me stay.

I love you, too, Ma, with my whole heart. Happy Mother's Day.

T.G.I.F.

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